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ABSTRACT

Inherent in the nature of community schools is the assumption that many more challenges can be overcome when those involved work together than when working on one's own. This assumption forms the basis of the efforts described in this manual. It describes what community schools are; the challenges they face; and the new realities for schools, families, and communities that form the context for community schools. Attention is given to the Children's Aid Society (CAS) and how it has created community schools in New York State. School curriculum and structure, integration of health, mental, and other services, and early childhood programs are covered. Results to date of the CAS schools are presented, including improved academic performance, higher attendance rates, greater parental involvement, and safer schools. The team-building and sustaining processes are also described where community agencies are brought in as partners in education. Other important points covered are the planning and financing of the school. Finally, nine concrete initial steps are presented that can form the basis of an action plan. This manual concludes with a list of reading resources and Web sites. (Contains 88 references and 8 resource Web sites.) (RT)

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Building A Community School

Third Edition

The Children's Aid Society

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Building A Community School

Third Edition

The Children's Aid Society

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Acknowledgments

Inherent in the nature of community schools is the assumption that we can overcome many more challenges when we work together than when we work on our own. That has certainly been true of our efforts in New York City that are described in this manual. To that end, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all of our partners who helped to make this vision a reality.

First of all, we must thank the City of New York, including Mayor Rudolph Giuliani whose support has been critical to our ongoing success, and Mayor David Dinkins who proved his innovative spirit by accepting this challenge in 1989. Second, we offer sincere appreciation to the five New York City Schools Chancellors who have encouraged and supported our efforts in countless ways: the late Richard Green; Joseph Fernandez; Ramon Cortines; Rudy Crew; and Harold Levy.

Special thanks go to the leaders of Community School District 6 and Community School Board 6 in Washington Heights for their initial and sustained work on behalf of the partnership over the past decade. More recently, board and staff colleagues in Districts 4 (East Harlem) and 8 (The Bronx) supported both the vision and reality of community schools, and for that we are extremely grateful.

Without the financial support of the Charles Hayden Foundation and The Clark Foundation when this project was still in its planning stage, none of our ambitious plans and good intentions could have been executed. Several other foundations have provided substantial additional support for our New York City work including: The After-School Corporation; Hasbro Children's Foundation; Bernice and Milton Stern Foundation; Tiger Foundation; and the ABC, Inc., Foundation, Abraham Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, AXA Foundation, The Arthur M. Blank Foundation, The Brookdale Foundation Group, The Louis Calder Foundation, Cleveland H. Dodge Foundation, Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, Drexel Burnham Lambert Fund, Bernard F. and Alva B. Gimbel Foundation, The Harman Family Foundation, Horace B. Goldsmith Foundation, William T. Grant Foundation, Hagedorn Fund, William Randolph Hearst Foundation, Kraft Foods, Inc., Leon Lowenstein Foundation, Inc., The Henry Luce Foundation, Edward S. Moore Foundation, J.P. Morgan, Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Pfizer, Inc., Jeffry M. and Barbara Picower Foundation, Starr Foundation, Travelers Group Foundation and the van Ameringen Foundation. Public sector support

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from New York City, New York State and the Federal government has also been instrumental in contributing to our success, demonstrating further the value of public-private funding partnerships.

The support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York enabled us to open a National Community Schools Technical Assistance Center in 1994; and major support from Citigroup and the Equitable Foundation has helped to sustain and expand the work of the Center. The Freddie Mac, Ambrose Wilder, Prudential and MCJ Foundations and the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds have underwritten adaptations of our community schools model across the country. To these and other donors too numerous to mention, we extend our heartfelt thanks.

Thanks are due also to many other partners and colleagues in Washington Heights, including the Association of Progressive Dominicans, Alianza Dominicana, the Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation and many elected officials and community leaders. Thanks also to our health partners — Mount Sinai Medical Center, Columbia University College of Dental and Oral Surgery, State University of New York-College of Optometry, Columbia Presbyterian Hospital and the Visiting Nurse Service — and to Fordham University and the City University of New York's Graduate Center for helping us develop and conduct rigorous evaluations of our work. Special thanks to the Society's Trustee Judy Dimon and the generous members of the Education Advisory Board, which she chairs; to Helene and Alexander Abraham for early and sustained assistance; and to the many people whose numbers make it impossible to list by name but who are crucial to our success every day.

Last, but by no means least, we wish to extend our thanks to the people of Washington Heights, East Harlem and The Bronx. Their determined spirit and overwhelming commitment to securing a quality education and a better future for their children have been a constant source of inspiration for us all.

FOREWORD

Can it be almost ten years since Phil Coltoff and I got stuck on the Metroliner together and he told me about The Children's Aid Society's new community schools? Schools that are open all the time, jointly run by a partnership between the community school board and CAS, offering a full range of support services for children and families, focused on community development...too good to be true, I thought to myself. The next week I made the first of many visits to those schools and became an instant convert to the concept. What a lot of sense it made to address simultaneously the two compelling issues of our time: how to assure academic achievement for all, and how to help children and their families overcome the barriers to obtaining that goal.

During the decade, the work of CAS in developing these model community schools has been an essential building block in the creation of a national movement. CAS provides the leadership, experience, energy and enthusiasm needed by youth advocates all across the country who are eager to move forward. CAS staff members show others how to operate in schools, how to plan together, how to train diverse staff, how to appreciate cultural diversity and where to get the financial and political support for all of these efforts. As you read through this workbook, you will learn from their experience that implementing a community school is no simple matter. Assessing needs, developing detailed plans and delineating roles for partnering organizations are time-consuming tasks — and that is just the beginning. One reason for the success of CAS's community schools is "eternal vigilance." They seem to approach each new day as they did the first one. Each challenge is met with a reasoned and appropriate response. They understand very well that to share a building with the school system and the teachers requires constant attention.

Earlier this year, I visited I.S. 218 along with Congressman Steny Hoyer, who shares our strong interest in legislation that will increase the visibility and sustainability of community schools. As we escorted him on the "grand tour," I noted how his reactions seemed to mirror my own first impressions. We heard a large group of fifth and sixth graders playing in a string orchestra, watched leotarded dancers and neophyte actors, went to math class, visited the bike shop, sat in the dental chair, talked to students in the always-busy library and heard about problems solved in the family resource room. He saw, as I have seen, that this is a place that respects children and their families.

You may ask, why can't all schools be like the CAS community schools? The answer is: we are not advocating "cookie cutters." Obviously, needs differ dramatically from one community to another, and so do resources. No two school/community partnerships will be exactly the same. But the concept should be universal. All schools can welcome community partners. All schools should be open as community hubs to the extent required in that neighborhood. Where access to health, mental health and social services is an issue, schools can become the preferred site of service delivery.

In my view, the future of public education is in jeopardy. Although public education is threatened on all sides by those who would dismantle it, all is not lost. Many of us believe that it is possible to create new kinds of institutional relationships that will strengthen the educational system while maintaining its democratic traditions. Local control and parental involvement are significant aspects of community schools. This workbook shows the way.

Joy Dryfoos

Joy Dryfoos

Hastings on Hudson, New York

September 2001

PREFACE

In 1989, The Children's Aid Society (CAS) of New York City joined in an unprecedented partnership with the New York City Public Schools, the city's Community School District 6 and community-based partners to develop a comprehensive response to the pressing needs of children and families in the northern Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights.

The challenge was a formidable one. A 1987 needs assessment conducted by The Children's Aid Society found a neighborhood struggling with the city's most overcrowded schools, a large population of poor, first-generation immigrant families, many young people at risk of dropping out of school and a dangerous paucity of health and social service providers. It also found a community with a drive to succeed and a determination to help its children achieve. Although we began with the idea of opening a new community center to meet the need for services in Washington Heights, an alliance with the public school system and community led to the creation of a new institution: a "community school." The community school would be an integral part of the neighborhood, a focal point in the community to which children and their parents could turn for a vast range of supports and services. It would simultaneously reach for the highest educational goals and standards, and contain all of the health, welfare and youth development services of a large social service agency. Medical, dental and mental health services, recreational programs, youth development services, family life education and even summer camp opportunities would all be accessible through this one building, while the comprehensive focus of every activity would be the promotion of children's learning and development. The building would be open up to 15 hours a day, weekdays and weekends, year-round. What we proposed was not simply to use the schools in the after-school hours, but to work side-by-side with parents, teachers and the broader community to ensure that children are given every possible chance to succeed.

The plan answered the calls of many policy experts who have contended

for years that services for disadvantaged families are too fragmented to meet their multiple and interconnected needs, that educational achievement cannot occur if children and their families are in crisis, that teachers are too often required to serve as social workers and that parents were being left out of the educational picture, often alienated from the schools their children attend.

Our vision became a reality in March of 1992 when Community School I.S. 218 opened its doors. Since then, eight additional community school partnerships have been established in three New York City neighborhoods — P.S. 5, I.S. 90, P.S. 8 and P.S. 152 in Washington Heights; C.S. 146 and P.S./I.S. 123 in the Bronx; and P.S. 50 and the Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics in East Harlem. Through these schools, CAS reaches more than 10,000 children and their families each year, in addition to the more than 100,000 children already served through our neighborhood-based centers, clinics and camps. All of these schools, while differing structurally and programmatically, have created a sense of renewed hope in their communities.

In 1993, shortly after the opening of the first two community schools, The Children's Aid Society published the first edition of this guide. The book was enormously popular from the outset and in 1997, after distributing several thousand copies to educators, government leaders, social service providers, parent groups and countless others who are concerned about the educational prospects of our young people, we published a second edition of the guide. The second edition offered updates on the Society's community schools – five at the time – and included expanded chapters on program planning, sustaining community school partnerships and funding community school programs.

In the nine years since the opening of our first school, and the eight years since publishing the first guide, we have accumulated a wealth of experience and knowledge about the day-to-day challenges of running a community school — lessons we hope will be instructive to anyone starting down this exciting path. With the 20/20 vision that hindsight so kindly

bestows, we have updated this book to share our experiences with both an old and new audience of educational innovators.

One thing is for certain: the audience for this message has clearly grown. When we published our first guide, there were few existing models of school-community partnerships, and the movement could best be described as a fledgling one. In the ensuing years, a whole new wave of school-based support programs has emerged, constituting a legitimate public school reform movement. While the models differ in method, scope and philosophy, all of them share the goal of bringing the community's best resources directly into the schools to ensure that children are physically, emotionally and socially ready to learn and that they have extensive ongoing supports designed to promote their achievement.

In 1994, The Children's Aid Society responded to this growing wave of interest by launching the Community Schools Technical Assistance Center at I.S. 218 to help other communities learn from our experience and adapt our model to their local circumstances. With support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Center has introduced more than 5,000 visitors from government agencies, foundations, corporations, parent associations, schools and social service agencies nationwide and internationally to the CAS model through site visits and workshops at our New York schools.

Our Technical Assistance Center has provided intensive capacity-building help to representatives of several cities that have established or are in the process of establishing community schools modeled after our program. In addition to hosting visitors in our New York schools, our staff makes national and international visits to provide on-site assistance. Since 1994, our model has been adapted in approximately 100 sites nationally and internationally. For example:

- The Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, Fordham University and Children's Aid have supported efforts in Long Beach, California, Salt Lake City, Utah and Boston, Massachusetts;

- The Freddie Mac Foundation has supported an adaptation site in Washington, D.C.;
- In Berkeley, California, a community schools project is currently underway and will serve as a model for three neighboring counties;
- In St. Paul, Minnesota, the Ambrose Wilder Foundation is working with state and city partners to operate several schools; support from the Prudential Foundation has helped underwrite a model in Newark, New Jersey;
- In addition, we're providing technical support to both the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and the Child Welfare League of America, umbrella organizations of which we are founding members, in their efforts to expand their partnerships with hundreds of public schools across the nation;
- Internationally, our technical assistance staff has consulted with educational leaders in the Netherlands, Wales, Ireland, South Africa, Japan, Australia, Mexico, Bonaire, Colombia and Cuba.

The Children's Aid Society is also one of the founding partners of the Coalition for Community Schools, a group of more than 150 local, state and national organizations formed in 1997 that seeks to strengthen and sustain community school partnerships. In May 2000, The Children's Aid Society collaborated with the Coalition and The Advertising Council to launch a national public service advertising campaign designed to increase public awareness of and support for community schools.

This, our third edition of *Building a Community School*, represents our ongoing commitment to promoting the development of community schools and providing the information and basic tools necessary to create effective community school partnerships. It provides a detailed look at the innovative programs at work in New York City and offers suggestions for building and sustaining community school partnerships, planning a community school program and funding these efforts. It reveals many of the steps we had

to take to reach our goals in New York City, some of the challenges we encountered and the philosophy that guided us every step of the way. This new edition situates the community schools approach in the context of 21st Century realities, and provides new chapters outlining the research base that supports our community school model, updated information on our progress and greater detail on available funding resources.

As we approach the ten-year anniversary of our first school in Washington Heights, the community school model has never been more relevant. There is growing recognition that the current American school schedule and structure are seriously out of sync with today's needs. As a January 10th, 2000 *New York Times* article reported, there is a "mounting sense that America's school schedule – which was based not on educational needs, but on those of an agrarian economy – should be ripped up and redrawn." Indeed, political and educational leaders throughout the nation are calling for dramatic changes in both the public school schedule and structure, changes that will enable students to meet the tougher curriculum standards that are taking hold across the nation. The community schools model is an innovative and effective response to these calls.

Research indicates that today's youth need a higher overall level of learning and development than any previous generation. In their ground-breaking book, *Teaching the New Basic Skills*, Harvard University professor Richard Murnane and MIT professor Frank Levy exposed a gaping mismatch between the essential skills demanded by today's employers and the skills with which most students leave high school. Other emerging research indicates that young people need ongoing guidance and support in all developmental domains if they are to achieve productive adulthood. Now, more than ever, our schools need to weave a web of support for students, providing high quality educational experiences as well as opportunities to grow and develop.

Researcher Joy Dryfoos wrote in her 1994 book, *Full-Service Schools*,

"A measurable segment of the society is not going to 'make it' without massive changes in the way that they are educated, supported and cared for. Families and schools...cannot fulfill their obligations without immediate and intensive transformation. New kinds of arrangements of community resources have to be brought together to ensure that children can grow up to be responsible, productive, and fully participating members of this society."

We hope this guide illustrates that it is absolutely possible to radically transform America's schools into powerful institutions that offer children, their families and entire communities true hope for a better future.

Philip Coltoff

Philip Coltoff
Executive Director
The Children's Aid Society

New York, New York
September 2001

Notes

What is a Community School?

A Brief History

The CAS Community School Philosophy

Key Ingredients

Helping Children Succeed

What is a Community School?

Community schools, sometimes called "full-service" or "extended-service" schools, are educational institutions that combine the rigorous academics of a quality school with a wide range of vital in-house services, supports and opportunities for the purpose of promoting children's learning and development. The community school unites the most important influences in children's lives – schools, families and communities – to create a web of support that nurtures their development toward productive adulthood.

This web of support might best be conceptualized as a triangle that incorporates three inter-connected support systems into one core structure:

A strong core instructional program designed to help all students meet high academic standards;

Enrichment activities designed to expand students' learning opportunities and to support their cognitive, social, emotional, moral and physical development;

A full range of health and mental health services designed to safeguard children's well-being and remove barriers to learning.

Some of the specific programs and services that may be found in community schools include extended-day instruction and enrichment, recreational and cultural programs, on-site health and mental health services, social services, parent support programs, adult education and teen programs. Typically, community schools are open during the regular school day as well as afternoons, evenings and weekends throughout the year, and the population they serve includes students, their families and the wider community. Parent involvement, participation and sanction are key to this process.

There is no single, best way to design and implement a community school. To be effective, communities must develop and tailor programs that reflect

their strengths and resources, to meet the unique needs of their children and families. Therefore, while in later chapters we outline the design of CAS community schools, we've opted against presenting a rigid program design to follow letter-by-letter. Instead, we present an overall philosophy and a set of key ingredients that have guided our own initiatives. We encourage you to use this information as a foundation upon which to create your own community schools by adapting, not replicating, our model.

A Brief History

The community school approach has its roots in the late 1800s and the establishment of the first urban settlement houses, which – led by the pioneering efforts of Jane Addams – offered vital learning and development opportunities to neighborhood residents of all ages, most of whom were newly arrived immigrants. In the early 1900s, educators and social reformers such as John Dewey, believing that schools were not performing their full functions, worked to bring these same opportunities into public schools, placing them at the center of community life. Another community education movement, driven by the work of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation in Flint, Michigan, caught the attention of the nation in the 1930s, again in the 1960s, and yet again in the 1990s and into the 21st Century.

The CAS Community School Philosophy

Establishing community schools means transforming schools into new institutions — institutions that are primarily focused on educating children but also help strengthen their surrounding communities. Although individual community schools may offer different program elements or teaching styles, CAS believes that the basic formula of the community school model is simple: educational excellence combined with critical supports, services and opportunities, delivered through school, family and community partnerships.

The three main components that characterize the CAS community school philosophy are:

Comprehensiveness — Its full-service approach is designed to address the multiple needs of children and families.

Coherence — Planning and decision-making are shared by the three major partners – the school, CAS and parents – in order to provide an integrated, coherent network of services and to promote a common vision and a sense of shared responsibility.

Commitment — CAS and its partner schools make a long-term commitment to work together with, and on behalf of, students and their families.

Key Ingredients

The following is a list of key ingredients that have helped shape CAS community schools:

Education First — While the community school concept offers a revolutionary vision of the role a school can play within the community, its primary goal should be the education of children. The school's core instructional program needs to be strong and effective if the extended services of the community are to achieve maximum results. Extended learning opportunities should serve to enrich and support the learning that takes place during the school day. Furthermore, the enriched health and social services of the school are all designed to ensure that children are emotionally, socially and physically supported so that they can focus on learning and developing to their full potential.

Collaboration — Community schools should be planned and implemented by an active partnership with a common mission, mutual goals and shared decision-making, including representatives of the school, parents, community leaders and community social service agencies.

Partners, Not Tenants — The lead social service provider must be viewed as a partner in the school in every way, not simply as a tenant who rents the gym or classrooms from 3:00 to 10:00 PM. Collaboration between school faculty and agency staff should reflect a sense of cohesion and common purpose.

A Long-term Commitment — Inherent in the nature of this partnership is a long-term commitment on the part of both the community agency and the school. This should not be a one-year project that will disappear if a key person takes a new assignment, but a permanent fixture in the community.

Integrated Services — Community schools should be designed to operate as a network addressing the multiple emotional, social and health needs of children and their families. In the CAS model, mental health is not handled separately from physical health, and school problems are not treated separately from health problems. Instead, the school team looks at the whole family and works together to develop comprehensive solutions.

High Level of Parent and Community Involvement — The community school must work to involve parents at all levels and as early as possible. They should be involved as partners in planning the community school, as volunteers or staff within the school, as members of the parents association and as partners in their children's education. To encourage this involvement, the school itself must be seen as a place not just for children, but also for entire families.

Before- and After-School Programs — More than "latch-key" programs, before- and after-school programs should expand children's learning opportunities, while dovetailing with the work children are engaged in throughout the day, to create a coherent learning experience. The after-school atmosphere may be informal, but should be instructional and allow for hands-on projects that enable students to apply what they have learned in class. In the CAS schools, teachers play a critical role in designing these programs, and many stay on to teach them.

Starting Fresh — The community school concept works best when it is developed from the ground up, not laid over some other approach that isn't working. A new building or school isn't necessary, but a new idea – created, implemented and evaluated by a joint school-parent-agency team – is essential.

Helping Children Succeed

Traditionally, public schools have been structured primarily to achieve academic goals. But increasingly, schools are finding that before students can achieve these goals, some basic emotional, social and health needs must be addressed. In fact, despite dwindling resources, many educators have been forced to serve as surrogate families, police officers, guidance counselors and social workers — usually at the expense of education. By bringing health and social service professionals into schools, community schools can relieve some of the pressures teachers face in filling these many roles, and create more time for them to plan and deliver lessons. In short, community schools can help free teachers to teach.

In addition, a streamlined system of services can leverage resources and avoid redundancy. For service providers and schools alike, community schools can be a cost-effective way to serve the community's families and children. Instead of spending money to build or maintain separate facilities, resources can go directly to programs.

By joining forces, community school partners can create new institutions whose services are better coordinated and more comprehensive than our existing public schools — institutions that are responsive to the needs of children and supportive of their educational success.

Community Schools: Responding to New Realities

New Challenges for Public Schools

New Realities for Schools, Families and Communities

Community Schools: Schools for Today

Community Schools: Responding to New Realities

There is little question that public schools need to be radically transformed if they are going to prepare our children to compete and thrive in today's world. As a nation, we are experiencing dizzying societal changes – economically, socially, demographically and technologically – and all signs indicate that such rapid change will continue to characterize this new century. To survive in such an environment is to adapt.

There may be no single institution other than our public schools that is more affected by the changes in our world and on which the pressure to adapt is more urgent. It is in our public schools that all of these changes intersect, and it is in the context of these changes that schools are challenged to do more than ever — to educate all of our nation's children at the high levels required for success in the new economy of the 21st Century.

New Chailenges for Public Schools

Our public schools represent the one neighborhood institution with the greatest potential for interaction with children and families. Today, 90 percent of America's youth and nearly all of our poor children attend public schools, and it is the public school that will continue to serve the vast majority of American children in urban, suburban and rural school districts alike.

At the same time, never before in our history has education been more vital to the future prospects of children. Although new expectations in the workplace require that schools drastically improve the skills of graduating students, economists Richard J. Murnane and Frank Levy show in their book, *Teaching the New Basics Skills*, that nearly half of America's 17-year-olds do not possess the skills necessary to earn a middle-class living. Those skills

include reading and math at a minimum ninth-grade level, problem solving, oral and written communications, knowledge of and comfort with technology, and the ability to work productively in diverse groups. In spite of these heightened standards, schools are struggling to meet children's basic needs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, a full 39 percent of fourth graders scored well below the basic reading level in 1998, while a solid body of evidence indicates that students who have not mastered basic literacy skills by the end of third grade stand at high risk of subsequently dropping out of school.

As noted in a special report published by *Education Week* in 2000, "America's schools are under pressure to produce, but ill-equipped to deliver." In response to new pressures over the past decade, 49 of 50 states have adopted standards for what students should know and be able to master in core academic subjects by grade level. In order to ensure accountability, states and districts across the country have adopted a variety of measures of success, often in the form of high-stakes tests. *But higher standards without commensurate increases in children's opportunities to learn can lead to educational inequity, already prevalent in our nation's schools.*

During the 1990s, a number of studies called attention to the importance of extending children's learning opportunities through supplemental programs and activities, both during the regular school day and during non-school hours. Substantial research, including Howard Gardner's theories about multiple intelligences, Reginald Clark's analysis of the importance of children's ongoing engagement in high-yield learning activities and earlier ideas of John Dewey and Jean Piaget, support extending children's learning opportunities through a variety of hands-on activities. For example, chess clubs, computer classes, visual and performing arts programs, sports and recreation activities, book clubs, community garden projects, woodworking, cooking and community service all help to reinforce children's academic development.

New Realities for Schools, Families and Communities

Although we may wish to treat it as a separate component, education simply does not take place in isolation from the lives of children and families. Typically, our society views educational achievement as the route to greater socio-economic opportunity, but fails to see how current socio-economic conditions affect achievement in the first place. To best serve our children, our schools will need to adapt to the changing realities in the world outside the school and in the lives of their students. Some of those new realities include:

Persistent Poverty — Despite a long period of economic expansion in the 1990s, child poverty in America is higher today than it was twenty years ago. According to the most current census data, national child poverty rose to 18.7 percent in 1998, from 16.2 percent in 1979. In addition, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that the proportion of working families living below the poverty line (15.2 percent) has remained relatively stable since the late 1980s. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's *2000 Kids Count Data Book* states that poor children – nearly one out of five children across our nation – face overwhelming odds against their success. They are more likely to be sick as toddlers, unprepared for kindergarten, fall behind in grade school or drop out of high school, and are less likely to be economically successful as adults.

Educational Inequity — A 1996 Carnegie Corporation report, *Years of Promise*, found that poor children have less access to quality preschool programs, rigorous elementary schools and after-school programs than their wealthier peers, and also that teachers have lower expectations for poorer children. Increasingly, schools attended by poor children are more likely to have unqualified, uncertified teachers than schools in more affluent districts, despite substantial evidence indicating that teacher quality is the single most important predictor of student success in school.

Widening Achievement Gap — Largely as a result of this educational inequity, there is a widening achievement gap between minority and white students, whether we use grades, test scores, course selection or college completion as measures, and whether we look at urban, suburban or rural school districts. A recent *Education Week* report on the topic noted that the racial/cultural origins of students "will, to a large extent, predict their success in school, whether they go to college, and how much money they will earn as adults." If current trends continue, the report predicts that, of the 3.4 million students who entered U.S. public schools in 1999, white children will be twice as likely as their African American classmates and three times as likely as Hispanics to have a college degree in 2019. The report also warns, "At a time when American schools have committed themselves to high standards for all students, an inability to close the achievement gap may lead parents in minority communities to lose faith in the ability of the schools to educate their children."

Changing Family Patterns — Research has found that parent involvement in education improves children's grades, test scores, homework and attendance, and that parents are willing to give time to this effort but are unsure of their importance and uncertain of what to do. At the same time, the steady rise in both dual income families and single-parent households leaves many families too overwhelmed to participate fully in their children's learning and development.

Inadequate Community Supports — According to the Carnegie Corporation, the lack of comprehensive community supports and insufficient integration of existing services are steep barriers to children's development. Many children and adolescents spend large amounts of time on their own, unsupervised and disconnected from adult relationships and guidance — despite our knowledge about the risk inherent in this situation and the mounting evidence about the multiple benefits of children's participation in organized programs during the non-school hours. On the risk side of this equation, a recent Urban

Institute study found that 21 percent of 6-12 year olds are regularly without adult supervision when not in school. These unsupervised children are much more likely to be poor than affluent, according to studies conducted by the U.S. Department of Education and the Chapin Hall Center for Children. This well-documented reality flies in the face of common sense as well as our sense of fairness, since we know that poor children are much more likely than their more affluent peers to live in unsafe neighborhoods.

Changing Demographics — The major influx of immigrant students in both urban and suburban communities poses a significant challenge to our schools. Today, one in five American students comes from a household headed by an immigrant. In New York City, where 40 percent of the population are immigrants, new research indicates that 140 languages are spoken in the city's public schools. According to *Education Week*, in Broward County, Florida – the nation's fifth-largest school district – students come from at least 52 different countries and speak 52 languages, and the number of children with limited fluency in English has nearly doubled since 1993-94. Immigrant students – a large proportion of whom are also poor – are more likely than others to drop out or leave school without the skills needed in a global marketplace.

Concerns About School Violence — A series of horrific killings in our nation's schools over the last five years has called into the question the viability of treating our schools as isolated enclaves. Prevention of such incidents will require schools to adopt strategies that develop meaningful connections to parents and students, involve the total community and create safe places where both learning and healthy development can flourish. In 1999, the FBI pulled together a panel of more than 100 educators, law enforcement officials, victim assistance advocates and mental health professionals for an in-depth discussion on school violence. A summary of the panel's discussion offers the following recommendation: "Many of our children need more support and guidance than they are currently receiving. It is impossible for families or schools to provide sufficient support and guidance alone. They must work together and in concert

with the total community to assist children as they develop, mature, grow. The barriers that we have placed between our institutions...increase costs, lessen efficiency and in the end harm our children. We must work together."

Community Schools: Schools for Today

In sum, today's community schools movement has grown out of a convergence of major shifts in the world that present new realities in the lives of children and families and new challenges to our public schools. Although community schools have been referred to as "schools of the future," the economic, social and technological changes that are taking place all around us indicate that the future is here. Community schools are schools for today because they offer a comprehensive response to the needs of 21st Century children and their families. With their emphasis on providing students with extended learning opportunities, bringing together the key developmental influences in children's lives – families, communities and schools – and providing essential supports, protection, guidance and opportunities, community schools are designed to help all students develop into productive adults who are able to earn a decent living, become responsible family members, and contribute to the larger society through good citizenship.

Notes

Community Schools: Built on Solid Research

References

Community Schools: Built on Solid Research

To many who hear it for the first time, the community schools concept makes intuitive sense: to improve the educational and developmental outcomes for children, create schools that provide the highest quality instruction, offer a wide range of supports, services and after-school activities, and encourage the participation of parents and the entire community. But community schools are not designed on intuition. They draw on a solid base of current knowledge about child development, educational reform, parent involvement and service integration. Below, we provide a breakdown of the guiding principles of effective community schools and present the research data that support these principles.

Community schools make the most of our children's non-school time by providing high-quality, supervised after-school experiences that extend learning opportunities and enable them to develop their talents, form positive friendships and connect with their communities.

- Educational researcher Reginald Clark (1988) has documented the importance of children's participation in constructive learning activities during the non-school hours. For example, he found that economically disadvantaged children who spend 20-35 hours of their free time each week in engaged learning (such as reading for pleasure and playing strategy games) get better grades in school than their more passive peers.

- Stanford University education professor Milbrey McLaughlin (2000) found that adolescents who participate regularly in community-based youth development programs (including arts, sports and community service) have better academic and social outcomes – as well as higher education and career aspirations – than other similar teens.

- In several studies spanning more than a decade, University of Wisconsin researcher Deborah Vandell (1999) has documented a host of positive benefits from children's participation in high quality after-school programs, including better grades, work habits, emotional adjustment and peer relations.

- According to a report published by the Washington D.C.-based organization, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids (1998), the peak hours for violent juvenile crime and victimization are between 3:00 PM and 6:00 PM, coinciding with the hours when parents are at work and children are out of school.

- The after-school hours are also the peak time for adolescent sexual activity to take place. Furthermore, research shows that being unsupervised after school doubles the risk that 8th-graders will smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs (Richardson, 1989).

Community schools provide young people with enriched educational opportunities, while also developing and strengthening their physical, emotional, social and moral competencies through a variety of supports and services.

- Extensive research on child and adolescent development indicates that young people need ongoing guidance and support in all of the developmental domains (cognitive, social, emotional, physical, moral and vocational) if they are to achieve productive adulthood, which is defined as having skills that will allow for participation in the labor economy, a responsible family life and an active citizenship. (See, for example, Eccles, 1999.)

- In his preface to the Carnegie Corporation's 1992 report, *A Matter of Time: Risk and Opportunity in the Nonschool Hours*, noted child psychiatrist James Comer states, "We must attend to all aspects of [young people's] development. Adequate development makes adequate education possible, which in turn facilitates participation in the mainstream economy and the ability to fill family, community, and citizenship roles."

Community schools offer parents an active role and voice in their children's education and a place where parents can improve their own lives.

- Multi-year research, for example by Joyce Epstein and colleagues at Johns Hopkins University (1995) and by Anne Henderson and colleagues at the Center for Law and Education (1995), has documented the importance of parental involvement in children's education as a key factor in promoting academic achievement. Specifically, this body of research indicates that children do better in school when their parents regularly support, monitor and advocate for their education.

- In a study of school and family connections in the middle grades, also by Epstein (1995), parents reported a serious lack of communication from schools and also reported that they themselves contact the schools infrequently. The study identified a need for middle schools to establish comprehensive programs for parental involvement and for parents to become involved in their children's schools.

Community schools view children and families holistically and bring many of the most essential services together under one roof, offering an effective, coordinated response to their needs.

- Several studies have documented how the fragmentation that characterizes much of America's service delivery system for children and families limits its effectiveness. (See, for example, Hodgkinson, 1989.)

- Researcher Joy Dryfoos (1994) synthesized a complex body of research on reducing risk and promoting resilience among children and adolescents and concluded that the single most effective intervention was the development and implementation of schools that integrate the delivery of quality education with needed health and social services.

Community schools bring together many of the important adults in a child's life – parents, teachers, principals, health professionals and youth workers – which allows for the adults' daily interaction and is conducive to joint problem-solving.

- A 13-year study in ten varied communities (Ianni *et al.*, 1990) found that child and adolescent outcomes were enhanced in communities where the key developmental influences (home, school, community resources) combined to provide consistent messages, opportunities and supports for young people.

- Resilience theory indicates that children who have consistent access to adult guidance and support have better outcomes, such as greater college and career aspirations, and a lower incidence of at-risk behaviors (Benard, 1991).

- A number of studies reveal that early adolescence is a time in which youth want a certain amount of separation from parents, but often would like to form close relationships with other adults outside the family. Many turn to their peers for guidance, but only if they do not have opportunities to bond with caring adults (Eccles, 1999).

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Children's Aid Society Community Schools: A Look at What is Possible

Innovative Curriculum and Structure

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Children's Aid Society Community Schools: A Look at What is Possible

Since 1992, The Children's Aid Society has entered into community school partnerships with nine New York City public schools, starting in Manhattan's Washington Heights community at I.S. 218 and later at P.S. 5, I.S. 90, P.S. 8 and P.S. 152; expanding into the Bronx with programs at C.S. 146 and P.S./I.S. 123; and also in East Harlem at P.S. 50 and Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics. Altogether, these nine community schools serve more than 10,000 children and their families.

While these schools differ structurally and programmatically, they share many common elements. Most of the schools are open all day, all week, year-round. All offer a range of on-site services, supports and opportunities, which may include health, mental health and dental services, extended-day academic programs, arts and sports programs, parent support programs and adult education.

In each of the community schools, the aim is to integrate school-day activities with extended-day and other programs to enhance student learning. The Children's Aid Society seeks to be a long-term partner in the design and operation of the schools, with the school principal and the Society's site director sharing responsibility for both implementation and results. To enrich the program's offerings, other partners have also been enlisted, including local universities, hospitals, businesses and other cultural and community organizations. Major New York institutions that work in our community schools include Mount Sinai Hospital, New York University, Columbia University, Mercy College, New York City Opera, the Broadway Theater Institute, the Alvin Ailey Dance Company and the American Ballet Theatre.

Despite their unique features, all of these schools are governed by the rules and regulations of the New York City Board of Education. They are not

"small" schools or "charter" schools or "alternative" schools. With the exception of Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics, they are zoned schools that draw students from their surrounding communities. Faculty members are selected according to contractual rules, and evaluation and assessment are standardized. Most are large schools, with an average of 1,200 students. Nine out of ten students qualify for the Federal free school lunch program.

Below are descriptions of the programs and services that make the CAS community schools key resource centers for all community residents, and dynamic models of the community school concept at work.

Innovative Curriculum and Structure

While The Children's Aid Society does not have direct involvement in the classrooms during the school day, it does consider a strong instructional program to be a vital prerequisite for establishing an effective community school program. In each of the schools, CAS is actively involved in developing extended-learning opportunities that reinforce what students are learning in the classroom. Community schools depend on high-quality instruction. They are not meant to "make up" for poor teaching or lackluster curricula. Instead, they are designed to support and enhance educational opportunities by addressing the full developmental needs of young people and by decreasing barriers to learning through medical, dental, mental health and social services.

I.S. 218 divides its 1,700 students into four theme-based academies, or mini-schools, in Business, Community Services, Expressive Arts and Mathematics, Science and Technology. Each academy has two self-contained units with five classes and five teachers, who also act as advisors. The curriculum draws from the latest middle school reforms, including interdisciplinary instruction, flexible scheduling and cooperative learning.

At P.S. 5, which has 1,350 students, the curriculum follows all New York State mandates and is organized around two divisions, Sciences and

Humanities. Within these divisions, there are separate "learning academies" for kindergarten through second grade and grades three through five. Furthermore, curriculum is organized around broad themes. For example, third graders might use energy as the organizing theme for their Sciences work and American communities as the theme for their Humanities work.

At I.S. 90, where overcrowding has required the school to move to double sessions, portions of the extended-day program have been reconfigured to run during the regular school day, so that students can be engaged in learning activities even when they are not in class, allowing for many more constructive learning opportunities.

At P.S. 8, an Early Head Start pilot has opened the school to preschoolers and parents, helping educators and families move away from the notion that education begins at kindergarten. The three- and four-year-olds who attend these classes are building strong school-readiness skills, and because of the linkages between P.S. 8 and I.S. 90, most of these children will have the support of a community school program for a full ten years, from age three through their middle school graduation.

At P.S. 152, a pre-kindergarten through sixth grade elementary school where 46 percent of all students are not fluent in English, a strong literacy program is emphasized with a comprehensive language approach that is directly related to the curriculum. The focus is on developing the entire spectrum of communication skills in the classroom by building on the primary language to introduce and reinforce new skills.

At P.S./I.S. 123, a Bronx school that is in the process of moving to a kindergarten through eighth grade program, teacher teams, advisory groups, theme-based interdisciplinary instruction and authentic assessment are some of the strategies being used to meet new performance standards and engage students directly in their own learning. Technology is employed as an instructional tool throughout the school and curriculum.

At C.S. 146 in the Bronx, the instructional program is enriched through *Project Arts*, which integrates music, dance and visual arts into the curriculum. A strong emphasis is also placed on ensuring literacy success for students. The *Project READ* after-school program provides reading assistance in grades two and three, while the *Reading Recovery* program targets selected first grade students who need intensive support.

The Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics is a selective high school that provides students with a rigorous and intensive academic curriculum. By offering a broad liberal arts program and requiring additional years of science, math, foreign language and computer science, the school prepares students to compete for admission to selective colleges.

P.S. 50, located in East Harlem, is the newest of the CAS community schools. A unique partnership involving the New York City Board of Education, CAS and Mount Sinai Hospital, the school focuses on comprehensive health prevention and promotion. Of particular interest in this model is the emphasis on asthma prevention and treatment. East Harlem has the highest rate of asthma hospitalization in New York City (41.7 per 1,000 compared to 16.6 per 1,000 citywide) and a sizable percentage of P.S. 50 elementary-level students suffer from this chronic illness, which affects their school attendance and performance.

Extended-Learning Opportunities

Although each school determines the kinds of activities it will offer based on the interests and needs of its students, all CAS community schools offer extended-day activities that provide additional educational experiences and enriched opportunities to grow and develop. Many of the CAS community schools open at 7:30 AM and stay open all afternoon and into the evening. Activities for the elementary and middle school students generally run until

Boosting Literacy in the After-School Hours

With increased pressure to use after-school hours to boost school performance, developing an engaging and effective academic enrichment curriculum has been a high priority in the CAS community schools — especially in the elementary schools, where building literacy skills is an essential task.

The 2000-2001 school year brought the implementation of two new after-school curricula in each of the four CAS elementary schools. These two programs, *Foundations* and *KidzLit*, have a strong literacy focus and reinforce the New York City academic standards for student achievement in fun, innovative ways. According to Sarah Jonas, an experienced classroom teacher who now serves as Children's Aid's Coordinator of Curriculum and Program Design for all CAS community schools, "Our challenge has been to package academic enrichment in a way that does not feel like school. At 3:00, kids are tired, so the work has to be really active and fun. If it's not, you lose kids' attention very quickly."

Foundations is a multifaceted curriculum that integrates all academic content areas through reading, writing and literature. Jonas observes, "*Foundations* uses children's literature to reinforce academic standards in a fun way. It was created with the after-school hours in mind." All students, from kindergarten to third grade, who are enrolled in the CAS after-school program participate in *Foundations*.

Developed by Foundations, Inc. in Moorestown, New Jersey, the curriculum has been rigorously tested and proven to raise student academic levels in reading and math. Students take part in *Foundations* two to three times per week for 30 to 45 minute periods and participate in individual, small and large group activities, as well as quiet and active play. In one unit, they read the book *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen, and then have fun acting out the various scenes in the book.

According to Jonas, "In an activity like this, children are building vocabulary, increasing comfort in English, and having fun because they are moving and expressing themselves physically."

KidzLit, formerly called the After-School Literature Project, was developed with intensive research and evaluation by the Developmental Studies Center in Oakland, California. It is the core after-school literacy curriculum for CAS community school students in grades four and five. Students take part in *KidzLit* twice a week for 30 to 45 minute sessions.

KidzLit offers a new approach to literacy: it uses children's literature to help students simultaneously become better and more motivated readers while improving their understanding of

themselves and others. *KidzLit* participants are encouraged to use books as starting points for discussing the issues that matter to them. After reading a story, they discuss why characters behave a certain way, what choices they face, what advice they would give characters and how these stories relate to readers' lives. They explore these issues through drama, art, music and movement, journal writing, "cool words" games and other informal learning activities.

For example, students read the book *Amos and Boris* by William Steig, which is about two friends, a whale and a mouse, who have to say good-bye to each other. After reading the book, students act out scenes from the story, and then write postcards, pretending they are one of the characters writing to the other. Participants are not graded on these after-school enrichment activities, which helps to alleviate much of the pressure that takes place during the school day. However, teachers are asked to keep work samples for each child so that at the end of the year, students, parents and staff can assess their progress over the year.

Art activities are a major part of both curricula. Students make puppets and drawings of favorite characters, and then explain why they see them in a certain way. "These are artistic, expressive activities that come out of the stories and get students involved in reading in a fun, creative way," notes Jonas. Central to both curricula are themes that are very common to schools such as family, culture, the environment and growing up.

Both *Foundations* and *KidzLit* are designed to be taught by anyone from a school volunteer to a certified teacher. Everyone who teaches the curricula receives special training. Curricular materials provide teachers with a wealth of activity choices for each book their students read, but they are also encouraged to adapt the activities using new approaches.

In each CAS community school, there is an educational coordinator, generally an educator in the school-day program who is trained in the use of the after-school curriculum and helps oversee its implementation. The educational coordinators support the work of after-school instructors, provide additional assistance when necessary, and ensure that the quality of the instruction is the highest possible. They can also serve as liaisons between teachers in the school-day and after-school programs, allowing for a creative exchange of ideas and greater integration of approaches.

In short, Jonas observes: "There is freedom in the after-school time. During the day, teachers can't take as many risks and don't always have the opportunity to incorporate more creative activities like art and music into their reading lessons. In the after-school program, the children really seem to be enjoying themselves. They are writing, drawing and talking about books — and that is very good to see."

6:00 PM each day. In the evenings, the middle schools are busy with programs for older teens, college students, parents and other adults in the community. Extended-day programs fall into the following categories:

✎ Academics

Academic support and enrichment are the central focus of the extended-day activities, increasing instructional time by one-and-a-half hours or more per child per day — the equivalent of an additional full school day per week. Nearly all of the schools offer tutoring and homework help. All of the elementary schools offer *Foundations* and *KidzLit*, two new programs designed and proven to increase children's literacy. Though extended-day activities often tie in directly to what children are learning during the school day, they are not simply continuations of classroom activities. Instead, educational enrichment activities are designed to reinforce learning themes by providing students with opportunities to apply the academic skills learned during the day to engaging, hands-on projects outside of traditional school hours. Among some of the more unusual offerings are I.S. 218's *Recycle-a-Bicycle* program, where children repair donated and discarded bikes, earn their own bikes and give others to charity, and the *Recycle-a-Computer* program, in which students recondition old computers and then take them home for personal use. Other enrichment programs include P.S. 152's *Breakfast Buddies* program, in which older children read to younger children before school starts; C.S. 146's Playwriting Club; Manhattan Center's *General Electric Scholars* program, which prepares a group of students for entrance into college engineering programs around the country; and P.S. 8's literacy initiatives, which include a Book Club, Book Talk, Dramatic Storytelling and Buddy Reading programs. Other activities that support academic achievement include a debate club, chess clubs, community service projects and mentoring programs.

Arts and Cultural Programs

The community school programs also encompass a full range of engaging creative activities that give children opportunities to express themselves in ways that are not always possible during the school day. Among the activities offered in the CAS community schools are student-created theater projects, a dance class run in partnership with the American Ballet Theatre, cultural dance programs, a "hip-hop" music class, choral music programs, a string orchestra, a jazz band, fine arts classes, arts and crafts programs, cooking classes and an African drumming class.

Sports and Fitness Programs

In the CAS community schools, children have the opportunity to play with friends in a supervised environment while developing a sense of discipline and self-confidence. Sports and fitness programs might include softball, soccer, basketball and track and field leagues, martial arts instruction, movement programs, nutrition classes and open gym times. Programs change from quarter to quarter, and new activities are always being developed to meet new demands.

Teen Programs/Youth Development

In the evening, older teenagers from the community can enjoy the school's recreational facilities and participate in any number of activities including athletic and arts programs, leadership training, family life/human sexuality workshops, high school and college prep services, mentoring, volunteer service, stipended work, and entrepreneurship and career readiness training.

Summer Programs

To reinforce the sense of community and learning that exists during the school year, a variety of summer activities and camp experiences are available through the community schools. The summer program includes day camps held at the schools, a teen day-trip program, a special summer dance camp with the Alvin Ailey Dance Company and trips to the Society's two country camps.

Bringing Health Care to the People

Sometimes making sure that low-income children get the health care they need requires more than opening the doors to a sparkling new clinic. First, you have to understand all the existing barriers to health care from the community's perspective.

When The Children's Aid Society first began examining access to health care in Washington Heights, it learned that despite an extremely concentrated population and an acute need for services, there were few primary health care providers in the community. There were no public hospitals in the district and only one private hospital. Many families in Washington Heights were not eligible for Medicaid and did not have health coverage of any kind as changes in welfare and immigration laws took effect in the mid-1990s.

But this shortage of health care facilities was not the only problem. Language and cultural barriers had left many families afraid of, and outside of, the health care system. Many of their children had never seen a doctor or dentist.

To reach these children, the community school partnership devised a three-step strategy: immediate outreach and service through a mobile health unit; long-term care through new clinics built on site at each school; and intensive health insurance enrollment efforts.

Today, five of the nine CAS community schools offer health services, which may include medical and dental care, food and nutrition counseling, optometry, medical referrals, drug prevention counseling, teen pregnancy prevention counseling, and mental health counseling for children and families. Nearly all students – and sometimes siblings – are seen at least once by the clinic in their school, which average more than 30,000 appointments a year.

Specialized services are offered as well. At the two elementary schools, P.S. 5 and P.S. 8, well-baby clinics provide check-ups, immunizations and early dental care. As children grow, they receive early vision screenings and expanded medical care, including first aid, assessments and medication. Dental care includes exams and x-rays, preventive and restorative work. Eye exams are offered at I.S. 218's eye clinic, with glasses paid for by Children's Aid and provided by the State University of New York College of Optometry.

The clinics are staffed by doctors, nurse practitioners, dentists and dental technicians from city hospitals and university medical centers. The Society's primary medical partner is Mount Sinai Hospital. As part of their training, nursing students from nearby Columbia Presbyterian Medical

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Center also spend one day per week at the clinics, conducting medical examinations and treating illnesses. When children need additional or specialized care, they are referred to Mount Sinai or Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, or to other specialists as needed.

In a community that constantly battles poverty, violence, drugs and crime, the need for mental health services is tremendous, and there has been great demand for these services since the community schools opened. Services include individual and group therapy, family counseling and crisis intervention, offered on site and by referral to Columbia Presbyterian. During the 1999-2000 school year, the CAS mental health staff scheduled over 9,000 visits with children and families for counseling for behavioral issues, domestic violence, addiction, immigration stresses, separation, loss and abusive relationships. The major goals of the community school clinics are full medical and dental care for every child, and a 100 percent vaccination rate against childhood diseases. Longer-term, the goal is to address the relationship between health, academic and emotional problems, and to meet the needs of the "total child" at a location that is central to child and family life.

In 1998, faced with the startling statistic that an estimated 325,000 of New York City children were eligible for Medicaid or Child Health Plus (the state-run insurance program) but not enrolled, The Children's Aid Society created its Health Care Access Program (HCAP) — an innovative and aggressive model for connecting children and families to crucial health insurance. HCAP places trained outreach and enrollment workers in CAS community schools and community centers to overcome barriers to enrollment, such as language and complex forms, and to walk parents through the enrollment process, step-by-step. Bilingual enrollment staff members help families complete applications, gather documents and cut through the bureaucracy.

Good health is an essential prerequisite for school achievement. That is why the CAS community schools are designed to address the total health needs of all students — from removing barriers to health insurance to providing access to the very best preventive, primary and specialized care available.

Integrated Health and Mental Health Services

Integrated on-site medical, dental and mental health services keep children on the road toward healthy development. CAS currently provides such services in five of its nine community schools in the form of school-based health clinics. The provision of services is especially important in communities where health care is limited and families frequently rely solely on the emergency room for routine primary care. By locating health clinics in the schools, medical problems can be identified and addressed before they become serious and parents do not need to miss work in order to obtain health care services for their children when they are ill.

School-based clinics are the first line of defense for students' health, bringing vital medical services to students every day. These services eliminate barriers that often delay needed health care and result in increased health risks and unnecessary hospitalizations.

The elementary schools set the stage for healthy development by offering primary care for infants and toddlers through a special "well-baby clinic" that provides health maintenance exams, immunizations, early dental check-ups, acute care for episodic illness and care for chronic health problems, such as asthma. The goal is to monitor and follow each child's growth and development throughout their elementary school years.

In the middle schools, our integrated medical and mental health services expand to serve the particular needs of this older, risk-taking student population. Services routinely provided for this age group depend on the needs of the community and funding levels. Services available at some of the schools include:

- ✔ Comprehensive primary care;
- ✔ Diagnosis, monitoring and management of chronic diseases, such as diabetes and asthma, including administration of prescribed medications as needed;

- ✔ Immunizations;
- ✔ Crisis intervention;
- ✔ Dental care;
- ✔ Hearing/vision screening;
- ✔ Social services including outreach and enrollment in health insurance;
- ✔ Case management;
- ✔ Health education, both individual and classroom, regarding high-risk behaviors.

Collaborations with several major hospitals enable the Society to provide the highest quality of health care available. The Children's Aid Society's main relationship is with Mount Sinai Hospital, which allows for the placement of Mount Sinai physicians in our health clinics. This makes indispensable hospital back-up services such as inpatient care and specialty clinic referrals readily available to CAS children. Other collaborations include Columbia University's College of Dental and Oral Surgery that provides specialized dental and orthodontic care, and the State University of New York-College of Optometry that provides eye exams and eyeglasses at several CAS clinics.

Mental health services are offered at seven out of the nine CAS community schools. These services include individual, group and family counseling — both short- and long-term. In addition, mental health workers (social workers, social work interns, psychologists and psychiatrists) also provide teacher consultations, lead advisory groups and participate in other special programs such as the Town Meeting program at I.S. 218 and I.S. 90, where students have opportunities to address adolescent issues such as dating, violence and peer and family relationships. Our mental health staff members are not based in isolated clinics but serve as partners with school guidance counselors, school social workers, parent aides, teachers and administrators. Through a privately-

funded depression screening and treatment project, our two Washington Heights middle schools have been able to conduct psychiatric assessments with a large portion of their students and provide necessary treatment on site. This project is implemented in full partnership with Columbia University's Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Parent Support and Involvement

While community schools offer many comprehensive services and supports to parents and families, parents are treated as partners rather than service recipients. Parents are actively involved in the community school team and are often an integral part of service delivery. For example, they might work as classroom and lunchroom aides, assist in the extended-day programs or coordinate special events such as fairs and holiday programs. In addition, parents participate in School Leadership Teams (a new school governance mechanism developed by the New York City Board of Education) and in city- and state-level advocacy efforts (such as lobbying for expanded public support for after-school programs and school-based health centers). Here are a few examples of the programs that our community schools offer for parents and families:

✎ Family Resource Centers

Many of the CAS community schools feature Family Resource Centers, which are designed to draw parents into the schools. Operated by CAS and school staff, parents and volunteers, the Resource Centers are places where parents can learn about the full range of school activities and programs available to them and their children, and also find out how they can obtain key support services such as emergency assistance, food, housing, legal aid, employment assistance, help with benefits and answers to tenants' rights and immigration questions. If services aren't available within the school or through

CAS, staff members provide referrals to outside services. Apart from the services offered, the Centers serve as meeting places for parents and are conducive to the cultivation of supportive friendships and neighborhood networks.

✎ Parent Workshops

Throughout the year, the Centers offer parenting skills workshops, helping parents learn about child development, school success and safety, and discipline issues, while also giving them the opportunity to practice new skills in group sessions. Workshop topics have included family life and sexuality education, entrepreneurial skills, nutrition, raising children during difficult times, and raising children with special needs. Through such programs as Parent Literary Circles at I.S. 218 and the Family Math Program at C.S. 146, many of the schools also offer parents opportunities to boost their own academic skills so they can better assist their children in school. And, just as their children do, parents have opportunities to have fun and exercise through such programs as salsaerobics.

✎ Adult Education

Adult education classes bring parents to the school to pursue their own educational and employment goals, but also to help engage them more fully in their children's educational life. From 3:30 PM until well into the evening, parents and other adults in the surrounding communities can take advantage of extensive adult education programs, including literacy programs, computer classes, GED preparation, English as a Second Language (ESL), job readiness programs, entrepreneurship, nutrition, cooking, dance and art. At I.S. 218, higher education courses are available through a partnership with Mercy College. At I.S. 90 in Washington Heights, the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo (UASD) offers graduate courses in ESL and in professional fields, enabling professionals who have immigrated from the Dominican Republic to obtain licenses and accreditation in their fields.

Giving Parents a Place to Turn

With freshly painted walls, comfortable couches and plants thriving in the sunshine, the Family Resource Centers in P.S. 5 and I.S. 218 could be mistaken for midtown corporate offices. Few schools in New York City – or any city – have such inviting rooms dedicated specifically to parents and families.

Located just inside the main entrances of both schools, the Family Resource Centers are the "first point of access" for parents. These are bustling places, with a constant stream of children, parents, staff and volunteers flowing in and out, and the frenetic buzz of conversation in English and Spanish. Parents are always welcome in the Resource Centers, whether to wait for their children, rest their feet for a moment, look into adult education opportunities or get assistance with a specific problem.

The primary objective of the Centers is to serve as a front-line defense against the kinds of problems that can keep children from achieving in school. According to long-time P.S. 5 Principal, Alice Stabiner, "If a child comes to school sick or hungry, or if the family is in crisis, he or she will find it very difficult to concentrate on school. We have to acknowledge and address the difficulties our students face in their lives outside of school so that they have every opportunity to learn and achieve in school."

Parents who are struggling with a new language or culture can come to the Center to get help in completing immigration and naturalization papers, sign up for English as a Second Language and GED classes, or talk with a social worker about family problems. Center staff and volunteers provide referrals to outside agencies, arrange appointments to other on-site services and, when necessary, accompany families to appointments.

Job counseling, housing assistance, emergency food assistance and legal aid all fall under the Resource Center's umbrella of services, giving parents a place to turn to when life's daily pressures are too great. The Centers also generate opportunities for parents to learn and have fun, offering information on classes in aerobics, drama, weight training and computers, and on workshops such as family budgeting and parenting skills.

"A key part of our mission is making this school the center of the community and integral to that is the involvement of parents," says Richard Negrón, former CAS Site Director at I.S. 218 and current Director of the CAS Community Schools Technical Assistance Center. "The Family Resource Center helps give parents a sense of ownership over the program and makes them feel welcome in the school community, but at the same time, it meets very basic needs in this neighborhood."

Health Care Access

The community schools serve as enrollment sites for CAS's citywide Health Care Access Program, a model program that facilitates enrollment in Medicaid or Child Health Plus for families and children who are entitled to, but not enrolled in, publicly funded health insurance programs. Bilingual enrollment staff members help families complete their applications, gather necessary documents and clear bureaucratic hurdles encountered along the way. Staff members track families even after they get their insurance to make sure they successfully access health services and stay insured. Rather than waiting for families to come to them for services, HCAP workers reach out to parents in the hallways, at school events and in the community to tell them about the program and get the process started.

Grandparent Programs

At P.S. 5 in Washington Heights, the Grandmothers' Group (*Abuelas en Accion*) meets weekly and gives older women in the community an opportunity to support each other and help each other access services. Several schools offer senior programs and all welcome the participation of seniors as volunteers. At P.S. 152, senior citizens visit the school twice a week to read to first and second graders through the local YMCA. Special programs also reach the sizable population of grandparents and older family members raising children who are not their own. They aim to bring these isolated families into the full embrace of the schools and to help caregivers better support the children's education.

Early Childhood Programs

At two elementary schools, the CAS model begins with early childhood programs that provide comprehensive services for children from birth through

age five and their families. Six Head Start classrooms and two demonstration classrooms of Early Head Start are in place at P.S. 5 and P.S. 8, all of which encourage active family involvement in children's education. Other services include medical and dental services, parent education, family visits and other activities that help parents support their children in these formative years. A specialized curriculum covers child development, safety, discipline, health and nutrition, and encourages parents to take active roles as their children's first teachers by reading, talking and listening to their child, and encouraging exploration.

Community Building

Over the past nine years, the unique mission of the community school has led to many projects that go beyond school-based efforts or typical school-community partnerships. The CAS community schools regularly host community-wide events, enabling residents to learn more about the school's approach and specific program offerings, and to appreciate and celebrate student work. Community clean-up projects have helped restore public parks and paint subway murals. Middle school youth have created neighborhood "peace teams" with local police. When the community successfully lobbied the city to build a footbridge over a busy intersection, it was the P.S. 5 Parents Association that provided the leadership. The community school concept puts schools in the center of civic life and helps provide a place for community members to come together to discuss and address their issues of concern.

Conclusion

Not all community schools need such an extensive menu of services; even a few of the above components can constitute a good beginning. In the final analysis, it is not the separate program elements that make a community

school, but the long-term commitment to bring parents, teachers and community together to ensure that children have whatever they need to learn and grow. In these schools, a teacher can walk down the hall to tell a social worker about a student whose grades have suddenly dropped, and a counselor can stop by a classroom to see if a student is showing any signs of improvement. The community school means that, for children, teachers and parents alike, help is often just a step away.

Notes

CAS Community Schools: Results to Date

Improved Academic Performance

Higher Attendance Rates

Positive School Environments

Safer Schools

Greater Parental Involvement

Improved Student-Teacher Relationships

Teachers Free to Focus on Education

Research and Evaluations of CAS Community Schools, 1992-1999

CAS Community Schools: Results to Date

In the nine years since the opening of our first community schools in Washington Heights, there have been a number of tangible accomplishments: improved academic performance and attendance rates, the creation of positive, safe learning environments for children, increased parent involvement and better student-teacher relations, as well as the successful implementation of critical health and social services and the achievement of a greater sense of community both within the schools and within the neighborhood. Over time, The Children's Aid Society has contracted with a number of external researchers, primarily from Fordham University, to evaluate the progress in our schools (see list at end of chapter). The findings of these evaluations are summarized in this chapter. Because I.S. 218 and P.S. 5 have been open the longest of all of our community schools, much of the data come from these schools. Evaluations are also underway at the newer schools.

Improved Academic Performance

In preliminary evaluations at I.S. 218 and P.S. 5, reading and math scores were higher than at comparable neighborhood schools, and sequentially higher for youngsters who had been in these schools for two or more years. At I.S. 218, math performance rose from 37 percent at grade level in 1994, to 44 percent in 1995, to 51 percent in 1996 — a total change of nearly 40 percent over two years. In the third grade class that entered P.S. 5 in 1993, its first year in operation, only 10.4 percent of students were reading at grade level. In that same class, 16.2 percent of students were reading at grade level by the fourth

grade, and 35.4 percent by the fifth grade. Math achievement at P.S. 5 increased from 23.4 percent at grade level in the third grade class of 1993, to 32.1 percent in fourth grade and 56 percent in fifth grade.

Later evaluations showed that students at I.S. 218 and P.S. 5 continued to improve in math and reading scores. This was true for students who graduated in 1997 and for the group that followed between 1996 and 1999, although 1998-99 test scores were not examined. There was also some evidence that participation in extended-day programs correlated with improved test scores, but this was not fully investigated.

Higher Attendance Rates

Attendance rates, including teacher attendance, were found to be higher at CAS community schools than at other local schools. Evaluators obseqved that at 92 percent, I.S. 218 had the highest attendance rate in its school district and significantly surpassed the middle school attendance standard of 85 percent in New York City. Furthermore, the evaluators noted that the attendance rate had improved each year since the school opened. Specifically:

- ✔ Attendance rates were slightly higher at P.S. 5 and much higher at I.S. 218 than at average city elementary and middle schools.
- ✔ Teachers had improved attendance rates at community schools.

Positive School Environments

Interviews and observations have consistently revealed that CAS community schools are different in overall climate from traditional, surrounding schools. Parents and students feel welcome and the pleasant physical environment contributes to a sense of cheerfulness, order and safety. In addition, students' own self-perception and behavioral conduct

were more positive than that of the comparison group, and students at both I.S. 218 and P.S. 5 had more positive attitudes toward school than comparison students. Specific findings include:

- ✔ According to evaluators, the community school environment was more cheerful, busy and welcoming than that in traditional schools.
- ✔ The community schools exhibited little or no violence or graffiti.
- ✔ Teachers, students and parents considered the school "special" and reported that they were safe places for children to be.
- ✔ Teachers in the community schools spent more time on class preparation and working with students than teachers in the comparison schools.

Safer Schools

In a city where violent incidents on school grounds are an all-too-common occurrence, with students accustomed to metal detectors and security searches, it is remarkable that I.S. 218 has had almost no violent incidents since its opening in 1992. Evaluators found that while the suspension rate for all New York City middle schools stood at 6.8 per 100 students, I.S. 218 averaged 2.2 suspensions per 100 students.

Greater Parental Involvement

According to the Fordham University researchers, the dramatic levels of parent involvement in CAS community schools were among the most significant findings. Parents were more involved, took more responsibility for their children's schoolwork, felt more welcome within the school, and were observed to be a greater presence in the community schools than in comparison schools. Parents also took advantage of the many services offered to

them, including the social and health services and adult education workshops. In particular:

- ✔ Parent involvement was significantly higher in the community schools – 78 percent higher at P.S. 5 and 147 percent higher at I.S. 218 – than in the comparison schools.
- ✔ Parents were involved in many ways throughout the school, not just in their child's academic work.
- ✔ Parents had a significant and notable *presence* in the community schools, according to staff and evaluator observations.
- ✔ Teachers rated parent involvement as an asset.

Improved Student-Teacher Relationships

Because CAS community school teachers participated in the extended-day program, where the atmosphere is more relaxed and informal than the classroom, researchers noted that teachers' relationships with their students improved. A formative evaluation of P.S. 5 found that teachers in the community school tended to perceive their children more holistically than did teachers in other schools.

Teachers Free to Focus on Education

In an evaluation of P.S. 5, Fordham University researchers found that the most consistent comment they heard in interviews of staff and families was that the wealth of services offered at the school freed teachers to do what they were hired to do: teach the children. Because children's extra-curricular needs are met in community schools and because teachers have the luxury of providing students with individualized attention during the extended-day program, they are able to focus exclusively on teaching during classroom time.

Despite the many challenges, the community school concept at work in Washington Heights continues to prove that, if given the opportunities and support they need, all children can learn and thrive in school. The staff and students at these schools have come together to create a totally new school environment. And despite the violent surrounding neighborhood, the schools have become havens of calm, friendship, hard work and learning. Children don't want to leave at night and they cannot wait to come back. And that, above all, may be our schools' most important measure of success.

Research and Evaluations of CAS Community Schools, 1992-1999

An Interim Evaluative Report Concerning a Collaboration between The Children's Aid Society, New York City Board of Education, Community School District 6 and the I.S. 218 Salomé Ureña de Henriquez School, 1993 by Esther Robison, Ph.D., Fordham University Graduate School of Social Services.

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Extensive passages in this chapter were excerpted from the report, "Summary of Research Findings, 1992-1999," prepared by Heléne Clark, Ph.D. & Robert Engle of ActKnowledge at the Center for Human Environments of the City University of New York Graduate Center.

Notes

Building the Team

The Critical Partners

Other Possible Partners

Clear and Common Goals

Challenges and Rewards

Building the Team

For community schools to be effective and long-lived, they must be developed from the very beginning as true collaborative partnerships — partnerships that are based on common goals and shared decision-making. Planning and implementation cannot be dominated by any one partner; maintaining an equal balance is critical, from the earliest planning stages and throughout the program's operation.

The Critical Partners

To create your community school, you will need to identify the people and institutions that will form your collaborative team. The earlier you involve all of these critical partners, the better your chances of developing a workable and effective plan with support and cooperation from all sides. Exactly who these team members are may differ from community to community, but they should probably include the following as a starting point:

School Representatives — These include school superintendents and principals, teachers and other school staff, local school district representatives and central Board of Education members.

Lead Community Agency — There should be one community agency that is willing to make a long-term commitment with the school or school district to carry out the community school concept and to manage the community involvement for the principal and superintendent. This agency will coordinate and facilitate the overall process by conducting the needs assessment, identifying and assembling partners, and organizing early

meetings. The agency should also help deliver core program elements and provide leadership for fundraising, staffing and program oversight. Although the lead agency bears a lot of responsibility, it should not act unilaterally.

Other Social Service and Youth-Serving Agencies — Other community-based service agencies with experience in providing recreational and educational programs, health and mental health services, foster care prevention and other human services should be included. Depending on the specific needs of your community, additional agencies that provide specialized services, such as immigration assistance and advocacy, translation services, public assistance help and housing assistance, may also be needed.

Parents and Other Community Members — The role played by parents and other community members in your school partnership will be multi-faceted and significant. They will provide a critical perspective on the specific services needed in the community, give firsthand accounts of the struggles and strengths of their neighborhoods, and help spread the word about the community school's services and goals. Overall, their participation will help instill a sense of community ownership and pride in the school.

Students — Because students will be most dramatically affected by changes, they should be afforded ways to contribute to the community school effort. By including children and youth in the planning and implementation of the program, you will help ensure that your school reflects the needs of its young people, and you will give older students genuine opportunities to develop leadership skills and a sense of responsibility for their community.

Funders — It is important to include private funders and government agencies that can provide input and expertise on program planning and implementation.

A Unique Governance Structure

The New York City Board of Education now requires every school in the city to operate a School Leadership Team. In the CAS community schools, the teams have played a vital role in bringing principals, educators, parents and community agency representatives together to develop comprehensive educational plans for their schools.

School Leadership Teams meet once every two to three weeks and have core responsibility for educational planning, budgeting and reviewing student progress in their schools. All School Leadership Teams in New York City must have between 12 and 18 members, with an equal number of school staff and parent representatives, all of whom are elected to serve for one year. Community partners are also invited to serve on the teams, bringing all of the key players to the table to establish goals and set the educational direction for the schools.

In each of the community schools, a CAS representative sits on the School Leadership Team, reflecting CAS's deep commitment to supporting the school's educational improvement and developmental goals. CAS's participation in these teams strengthens our ability to create expanded learning opportunities for students in the after-school hours that are in sync with the school's overarching educational strategy. Through these teams, CAS staff gain insight into the school's full education plans and activities, have input into those plans and can keep school and parent representatives informed about our work.

"It's very important for us to be at the table," observes Richard Negrón, who represented The Children's Aid Society on I.S. 218's School Leadership Team during the 1999-2000 school year. "It is an affirmation of our commitment to the school and of our significant role within the school. With our interest in promoting both academic achievement and the healthy development of students, we represent a very specific and valuable perspective."

Shared learning is a vital function of the School Leadership Teams, as participants gain new insight into the perspectives of fellow members, whether they be parents, teachers, administrators or community agency representatives. "Serving on the School Leadership Team the first year was a real eye opener for me," recalled Negrón. "It really furthered my understanding of the educational issues that the school must deal with every day and it gave me the opportunity to share our work with the full school community."

CAS's involvement is also helping to ensure that parents throughout the community are fully

involved in school activities. "The School Leadership Team is a wonderful avenue for parents to have a stronger voice in the school and to play a meaningful role in educational decisions," says Negrón. "And parent participation is a key component in the success of every community school."

Of course, bringing together people from diverse viewpoints can create some challenges, but clear, team-created ground rules help keep the process moving smoothly. Teams engage in collaborative planning, problem solving and shared decision-making. All decisions must be achieved by consensus. A team chair is elected each year and aids the group in defining decisions that need to be made, keeping the meetings moving and focused, ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to participate, and determining when consensus has been reached. Everyone in the process has a right to express their ideas and a responsibility to assure that others have a chance to be heard. In an effort to build a sense of solidarity, School Leadership Team members at I.S. 218 participated in a two-day retreat in which they learned about group dynamics, team building, conflict resolution and communication, and strengthened their commitment to developing positive working relationships to accomplish their goals.

According to Board of Education guidelines, "The goal is to find a creative solution that synthesizes the ideas and concerns put forward by the group. Through consensus, the group works to achieve better solutions while also building communication and trust." At CAS community schools, this sharing of school leadership among parents, educators and CAS is helping to build a mutual trust and confidence among all team members — key factors in the success of any community school partnership.

Other Possible Partners

As collaboration is the overarching principle of the community school initiative, there should always be room for new partners. Even if they are not involved from the early planning stages, new partners can play meaningful roles in the school. The key is to explore the resources available in the community, identify the value of potential partners and work to integrate new partners in the fabric of the school. Some of these partners might include:

- ✔ Child welfare authorities
- ✔ Vocational schools
- ✔ Area hospitals and clinics
- ✔ Local businesses and corporations
- ✔ Community foundations
- ✔ Employers
- ✔ Police and other law enforcement agencies
- ✔ Libraries
- ✔ Arts and cultural institutions
- ✔ Local universities/colleges
- ✔ Legal assistance organizations

Clear and Common Goals

For many, the balancing act needed for community school collaboration will require a drastic shift in work and leadership styles. Participating agencies may have to change how they deliver services to children and families as they

learn to work alongside other community agencies. School principals and school boards will have to share some of their decision-making power with other members of the community school team.

In Washington Heights, specific problems areas were recognized from the very beginning: Who makes decisions on allocating space in the school? How do you control access to rooms with valuable equipment and materials such as the computer room, library or music rooms? How would custodial contracts and opening fees be handled? To facilitate problem-solving in these and other areas, ground rules were agreed upon by partners early in the planning process. By setting broad, shared goals for your community school program – goals that are larger than the goals of any one partner and cannot be achieved by any one group alone – you can help create a sense of cohesion and common purpose among the several partners on your team.

Challenges and Rewards

However challenging they may seem, these efforts at unity and teamwork will pay off in the long run. The team approach allows you to bring the expertise of a wide range of fields to the particular problems faced by community children and families. Together, the community school team can accomplish much more than any one team member could accomplish alone.

Notes

Sustaining the Partnership

Issues to Confront

Building a Basis for Collaboration

Sustaining the Partnership

Challenges are bound to surface when you bring people who have different training, expertise and experience together for the first time in a common effort and ask them to share decision-making and power. It may take some time to resolve or work through initial problems, but with foresight and realistic planning most of these issues can be resolved early on.

Issues to Confront

Some of the issues that may come up in the early stages of the collaboration include:

Different Work Styles — Every profession has standards by which its members are accustomed to working. When you bring teachers together with social workers or health professionals, the difference in work styles may cause some initial turbulence. Even simple things, such as a preference for communicating orally rather than in writing, can get in the way of collaboration, unless conscious efforts are made to focus on achieving the common goals of the team.

Speaking Different "Languages" — Even when everyone is speaking English, there can be language barriers. Within your partnership, you will have a mix of lay people and professionals, who have developed and refined their own distinct languages or jargon. Terms that have very clear meanings to some may be unclear to others. For effective communication to take place, these barriers will have to be broken down and a new, common language must be developed.

Priorities — An asset of the community school program is that it brings people with different expertise together to work as a team, but these groups will

naturally have their own distinct priorities, rooted in their philosophies, training and personal histories. If priorities conflict too much, a sense of competition can easily develop between community school team members. Instead, a consensus on common priorities should be developed and kept in focus at all times. This can be accomplished through the creation of a vision statement that spells out a shared philosophy and broad goals that will guide the group's work through the planning and implementation process. It must be understood that the benefits of the partnership are greater than the perceived individual loss of identity, power or agendas.

Partner vs. Tenant — If social service agencies are viewed as tenants in the building, rather than integral members of the school team, many of the objectives of the community school will be difficult to accomplish. From the outset of the program, everyone involved in making the program work should contribute to the design of the community school and be clear about the rationale for this integrated structure. Keep in mind that team members are partners who are "co-constructing" the vision, the plan and the ultimate product.

Professionals vs. Community — Professionals with years of training and experience in their fields are not always receptive to the ideas of parents or grassroots participants. Not all partners are going to have credentials that reflect advanced degrees or training, but their knowledge and understanding of the community and personal concern for its children can make their contributions critical parts of the mix. On the other hand, local people with strong ties to the community may be suspicious of professionals who seem disconnected from the realities of the neighborhood. Even among professionals, there may be some biases against one field or another. For the partnership to succeed, all members have to recognize and respect the strength that comes from each partner's experience.

Building a Basis for Collaboration

While you cannot plan for every challenge along the way, there are things you can do to put the team on the path toward cohesive partnership. Some ideas you should consider in planning are:

Plan Together from the Start — If all parties involved in the collaboration are also involved in the early stages of program planning, there will be an enhanced level of commitment and understanding of the program's goals and mission. Try to involve all partners as early as possible, including the parents, teachers and social service agency staff who will be expected to work together on a day-to-day basis.

Clarify Your Vision and Mission — Your first collaborative effort as a partnership might be the creation of a vision statement that will guide you in all of your work. The vision statement should outline specific goals, but should also communicate the partnership's overarching purpose, philosophy and long-term aspirations for the community school.

Set Ground Rules — Develop ground rules outlining who will lead meetings, how decisions will be made, how problems will be addressed, how grievances should be handled and other scenarios you can expect to encounter along the way. You won't be able to anticipate every problem, but clear guidelines and procedures will probably help your partnership avoid many potential pitfalls and unnecessary confusion. These ground rules should be revisited regularly to ensure that they continue to support the work of the team as the program evolves.

Assess Your Core Competencies — In moving from vision to initial implementation, it is important to assess and articulate the skills and expertise that each partner brings to the work. This will enable you both to identify gaps and to manage expectations.

Start Small and Build Gradually — You needn't open a full-scale community school that incorporates all of the elements covered in this manual right away. You might consider starting with a small after-school program and a Family Resource Center; then you might add counseling and parenting workshops; and then, medical services. By building up to a full program slowly, you can observe how well the collaboration works in a limited scope and consider ways of resolving issues that arise before the program grows. In addition, this kind of slow expansion allows trust to grow among the partners at the site.

Bring Parents in Early — The sooner you involve parents from the community, the easier it will be to spread the word of your new program, mobilize support and build community acceptance. With their unique perspectives on the problems and needs of their community, parents and other community residents will have a lot of valuable information to share, especially when you are still at the drawing board.

Share Decision-Making — Throughout the program's implementation – from the design and planning stages to the daily operation of the school – partners should be consulted and given ample opportunities to express their views about new program elements or other changes. However, shared decision-making and strong leadership are not contradictory. At various times, depending on the issue at hand, one partner can and should become the group's natural leader.

Prepare Team Members to Work Together — Before the doors to your community school open, training opportunities should be arranged for teachers, school staff, agency staff, parents and school administrators to develop the skills they will need to make their collaboration work. Small, interactive workshops should focus on developing team building, shared decision-making, communication and conflict resolution skills, as well as on discussing cultural sensitivity.

Stay Flexible — Above all else, a community school requires a willingness on the part of all involved to be flexible. Do not expect everything to go exactly as planned and do not expect to be able to continue working just as you always have. Those people who are most capable of adapting to change and who welcome the opportunity to grow and innovate will be critical assets to your community school program.

Keep Developing Your Team's Capacity — Promoting children's learning and development while responding to the ever-changing context of public education requires a complex set of skills. Advances in knowledge are made every day, and it is a challenge for busy practitioners to keep up with these developments. Also, working in partnership requires that relationship-building and group problem-solving skills are taught and continually reinforced. Many successful community school teams have found that annual planning and team-building retreats or other vehicles for skill and partnership development are effective.

One of the most powerful lessons we have learned from our community school endeavors is that team-building isn't work that happens once and can be forgotten; it requires continued examination and daily effort. Some partners may resist the challenge, fearing that their professional identity will be lost or that by working collaboratively, they will somehow have a "smaller piece of the pie." Our experience suggests that just the opposite is true. Collaboration reduces service duplication, frees up time and funds for additional services, and increases the effectiveness of professional services. The investment of patience and flexibility pays off — it benefits all partners, especially and most importantly, the children.

Assessing Community Needs and Strengths

Laying the Groundwork in Washington Heights

Essential Steps in Assessing Needs and Strengths

Assessing Community Needs and Strengths

To design a community school that will effectively respond to the needs and strengths of the community, there must be a clear understanding of what those specific needs are and what assets, resources and services already exist in the community. This may seem like an obvious statement, but sometimes in the rush to provide services in communities where there is much work to be done, we fail to step back and take the time to examine the unique characteristics of the community. This can result in a needless duplication of services or, worse, the oversight of some basic and critical service needs.

Some communities will have an abundance of quality health services and will not need to include these services in their community school. An impressive parent education program offered by a local community college may eliminate the need for such a program at your community school (although the school will still need to involve parents in other ways). This chapter focuses on the importance of community surveys. A thorough and professional neighborhood assessment should be the first major task undertaken by your community school collaborative. It will serve as an invaluable guide, helping you to narrow or expand the focus of your program by providing an accurate picture of your community's particular service needs and strengths.

No one community school model will fit all settings, and attempts to impose a prefabricated plan that worked well elsewhere can be met with skepticism and resentment. A successful community school will be designed and tailored in tune with the history, current conditions and political realities of a specific neighborhood.

Laying the Groundwork in Washington Heights

In 1987, five years before the first community school opened in Washington Heights, The Children's Aid Society began a community survey as a first step in determining whether the agency would bring services into the neighborhood. Through data analysis, interviews and observations, researchers examined the demographics, economic circumstances, housing issues, employment patterns and other quality of life issues facing Washington Heights residents. They surveyed the services that were available to neighborhood families, examined data from official sources such as the U.S. Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and interviewed community leaders and community residents to gain their insights on community conditions.

This work revealed compelling needs and strengths. Among the community's challenges were poverty and crime rates that were the highest in the city; a large youth population in the most overcrowded, poorly performing schools; no public hospitals and only a single private hospital; and its status as an unofficial "port of entry" for documented and undocumented immigrant families. On the positive side, there was a hopeful spirit in the community, great value placed on children and their education, and a culture of tight-knit, extended families. These needs and strengths alike became key considerations in planning and building our community school.

Essential Steps in Assessing Needs and Strengths

In order to get a thorough and objective reading of the community's service needs, and come to a clear understanding of community residents and the complexity of their lives, an extensive and professional community survey must be completed. Nonetheless, while it should be coordinated by someone with survey experience, the process of collecting data and conducting

interviews and surveys can and should involve all members of the partnership, including parent association members, school board members, teachers, administrators, community-based organizations and other human service agencies. At a minimum, this community survey should include the following steps:

1. Collect Available Demographic Data

Using available data from local, state and Federal governments, census reports and other appropriate sources, examine the demographics of the community, paying particular attention to key indicators in the areas of health, economics and education. Gather information on the neighborhood's cultural make-up, median income, public assistance figures, unemployment rates, housing data, crime rates, child immunization rates and school performance measures. Analyze trends to determine where indicators are moving. Much of this information can be found at a local public or university library or by calling the sources directly. United Ways, planning councils, and the Internet can also be good sources of information.

2. Reach Out to Community Residents

Interview a broad range of families and children living in the community to gain insight into their perceptions of the community's needs and strengths. What do they see as the most critical needs of the community? How effective are current services? What barriers to service do they face? You can reach out to community residents through a number of different methods, including formal and informal interviews, surveys and community meetings. Parents and community representatives can play an active role in gathering information and conducting interviews and surveys with their families, friends and neighbors.

3. Tap the Expertise of Local Leaders and Human Service Professionals

Interview community leaders: school administrators and teachers, health professionals, human service leaders and front-line staff, as well as business,

political, law enforcement and religious leaders to gain their perspectives on the special needs of the community, the effectiveness and range of services offered and existing barriers to accessing community services. This can be accomplished through small informal meetings, individual interviews, phone calls and community forums.

4. Learn What Services Currently Exist

Develop an inventory of the resources and services currently available in the community, including a detailed description of the program areas they cover. Pay particular attention to youth programming, health services, child and family support services and educational opportunities. How have these resources been utilized? How accessible are they? Which are stretched beyond capacity, missing from the mix or under-utilized?

5. Look at the Community's Strengths

Some community strengths may be tangibly measured, such as a recent growth in jobs in the area, active parent involvement in local schools or the proximity of a major university. They can also include more intangible factors, such as positive community spirit, strong civic and religious institutions, good formal and informal leadership, strong family ties and social networks and powerful entrepreneurial drive, such as we found in Washington Heights. Ultimately, the realization of the community school's potential may rely as much on these strengths as on its program and service components.

6. Look to the Future

What kinds of issues can the community expect to confront in the coming years? It is important to think preemptively: anticipate potential community needs and strengths instead of waiting until they are already upon you.

The community survey is a critical first step in understanding and planning for the needs of your community. The more time you take to include the experiences and viewpoints of all of the key constituencies in your community and incorporate these views and realities into your program design, the more responsive and effective your community school will be.

Planning Your Community School

Where Will Services be Offered?

How Will You Pay for the Program?

What is Your Timeline?

How Will You Measure Your Impact?

Where Will You Need Help, and Who Can Help You?

Planning Your Community School

Once you have taken the crucial steps of building your team and thoroughly examining conditions in your community, it is time to start planning your community school. Most of this work will start on paper, as your community school partners come together to design and plan a program that will satisfy both the vision you have established for your program and the conditions and resources you have identified through your community survey.

While your vision statement may have spoken in broad strokes about the partnership's most ambitious goals for your school, it is now time to start talking about specifics. What services will your community school offer? Who will be eligible for these services? How will you staff these programs? How will you pay for them? How will you ensure a coherent program? These are difficult questions to answer and will require strategic thinking and careful planning. But the more time you dedicate to planning now, the more effective your program will be in the long run.

Although our goal is not to predict the exact course of your program planning process and lay out a prescribed set of steps you should follow, this chapter highlights some of the questions you will most likely encounter as you shape your community school.

Where Will Services be Offered?

In many school districts, space is a scarce commodity and creative use of facilities, especially during non-school hours, can open up new possibilities. As you plan your program, be sure to anticipate the space ramifications for each program component and to get input from the people who will be most affected by new uses of existing space. If overcrowding is a problem during the school day, you might ask neighboring institutions (who should also be

included in the planning process) if they can provide additional space for some programs, or if nearby community centers, camps or colleges can serve as "second campuses."

How Will You Pay for the Program?

You will have to develop a strategy for paying for your community school program. Funding resources for your program may include partner agencies, government, foundations, corporations and local businesses. Support may come in the form of grants, contracts, staff time or in-kind donations of supplies, equipment and services. In most cases, you will have to combine a variety of sources and re-direct funding from existing programs. Chapter 10 expands upon program funding and offers suggestions for funding strategies. You will also need to consider how you will maintain your fundraising efforts.

What is Your Timeline?

It's one thing to have an ambitious plan on paper, but quite another to implement it. A timeline will force you to be realistic about what you can accomplish, and it will probably ensure greater success in the long term. Be sure to determine when you will begin to reach out to potential partners; when staff recruitment and development will take place; what programs you launch the first — and second — years; and whether there are any services that should be launched immediately. As your program takes shape, you will need to commit yourself to a specific implementation timetable — and then stick to it.

How Will You Measure Your Impact?

Before you even start offering services, you will need to have a plan in place for measuring the effectiveness of your program. A well-conducted

evaluation will help you chart your progress in meeting your goals, identify your program's strengths and weaknesses, and demonstrate your commitment to accountability. You will need to decide what you want to measure in your evaluation, how you will collect and record critical data, and who will coordinate the overall process.

Where Will You Need Help, and Who Can Help You?

In Washington Heights, The Children's Aid Society sought formal resolutions of endorsement for its community school initiatives from the central Board of Education and the Community School Board. We built trust by bringing key health, after-school and summer programs into the community at parents' request, *before* the first school was opened, thereby laying the groundwork for a vital Parents Association. We engaged a local university's graduate schools of education and social services to document our efforts. We combed professional literature for approaches that had worked and not worked for others, and talked to everyone we could find who had an interest in school/community collaborations. The list at the back of this workbook suggests similar resources for you, as can our Community Schools Technical Assistance Center at I.S. 218.

Planning is a critical process as you develop your program. It forces you to confront and address serious obstacles and logistics before you begin offering services. But you cannot possibly anticipate every problem you will encounter in implementing your program, nor should you try. In fact, it is the way in which your partnership solves problems along the way that will define the collaboration and determine your effort's effectiveness and sustainability.

You may find that your program looks very different in practice than it did on paper. That is perfectly natural. The best programs will be flexible and able to adapt to contextual changes as they evolve and grow. Key to this process will be the partnership's ability and willingness to look objectively at what is working and what is not — and to change direction whenever necessary.

Paying for Your Community School

Community Schools are Cost-Effective

Savings for Social Service Agencies

Savings for Schools

Expanded Services: Small, Incremental Expenses

A Menu Approach

Funding and Sustaining Community Schools: Key Lessons and Principles

Case Study: Sustaining CAS Community Schools

Conceptual Approach

Federal Support for School-Based and School-Linked Services

Paying for Your Community School

Before you can offer comprehensive services in your community school, you will need to secure funding to support and sustain your efforts. Just as new community partnerships can maximize service efficiency by bringing together individuals with a wide range of expertise, they also allow for funding and savings opportunities that enable spending to go directly to services for children and families. Capitalizing on these funding opportunities can be a delicate art, as it requires you to piece together a number of different funding streams to create a holistic, integrated program.

Community Schools are Cost-Effective

The large scope of community school programs and services described in this manual may lead some to believe that it would be too expensive to establish such an institution in their community. However, we have found that one of the most appealing aspects of community schools is their cost-effectiveness. By locating all child and family services within a single facility, both social service agencies and schools have opportunities to save.

Savings for Social Service Agencies

- ✔ Without rent or a stand-alone building to maintain, agencies can save a substantial portion of their occupancy costs.
- ✔ Outreach costs are reduced because the school acts as a natural outreach mechanism.
- ✔ Transportation costs are minimized because the children are already at the school.

These expenses may represent as much as 20 percent of an agency's budget that can be immediately reinvested in services.

Savings for Schools

- ✔ Teachers are able to dedicate more time to education and less to non-academic issues.
- ✔ Because children are receiving supports and opportunities that improve their readiness and ability to learn, money that is spent on education is being spent more productively.
- ✔ The school building no longer sits empty afternoons, weekends and summers; when it isn't being utilized for community school programs, it has a natural constituency of community groups and other service agencies to whom it can be made available for a fee.

Expanded Services: Small, Incremental Expenses

While local costs and funding opportunities will always vary, one point is key: even with a very limited budget, most communities can implement a community school program with the funds they are currently spending on child and family services.

It may help to think of the community school program in terms of costs per capita versus the current cost of public education.

Consider this hypothetical start-up example:

Community school program annual budget	$400,000
Number of children/families served	400
Program costs per child	$1,000
Public School Expenditure per Child (NYC, FY 2001)	$10,000
Incremental cost of community school program	+ 10%

In this example, for a modest increase of 10 percent over current spending, children and their families are served all day, year-round, with a full range of services. Because services are part of a comprehensive program rather than an isolated effort, classroom spending, health spending and social services spending all are leveraged for maximum impact.

In Washington Heights, The Children's Aid Society program at I.S. 218 is a comprehensive one, but at $1,000 per year, per child, in FY 2001, it costs just a fraction of the cost of a public school education. Roughly one-third of the cost is for health, dental and mental health services, and two-thirds is for the core programs in education, recreation and preventive services. In calculating and presenting these costs, CAS recognizes that not all 1,700 students need or choose to access every available service — although all are eligible. Therefore, others should consider these costs as realistic averages rather than as a template for projecting their own possible expenditures.

A Menu Approach

The community school can be implemented on a modest budget or a much larger budget. Keep in mind that services can be adjusted depending on resources or phased in over time. You can start with a program of almost any size:

START-UP PROGRAM	MEDIUM PROGRAM	LARGER PROGRAM
Extended-Learning Activities	Extended-Learning Activities	Extended-Learning Activities
Family Resource Center	Family Resource Center	Family Resource Center
	Summer Program	Summer Program
	Health Screenings	Health/Mental Health Services
	Community Events	Teen Programs
		Adult Education
		Early Childhood Development
		Community Events

Funding and Sustaining Community Schools: Key Lessons and Principles

To fund your community school, you will have to draw on existing resources from current programs, and promote the creative use and coordination of previously separate funding resources. Your funding sources should include government grants and contracts, legislative earmarks, community foundations, private funders, in-kind gifts and fees-for-service. Starting from the premise that sustainability requires a long-term strategy and dozens of shorter-term tactics, the following are key lessons learned thus far from the CAS experience in building and sustaining our local community schools:

1. **Assess your existing resources (financial, capital and human) to see how they can support community schools.** Look at your current budget to determine where you might shift funds to school-based programs. This may mean moving an existing after-school program to the school or relocating two social workers from another site to staff the school's Family Resource Center. CAS decided to sell under-utilized property and valuable air rights in order to generate endowment and program dollars that could seed and support its original community schools. Our underlying idea was to begin building a pool of controllable and sustainable resources.

2. **For external fundraising, especially seed money, start with your friends.** This "path of least resistance" strategy worked very effectively for CAS at the beginning, and continues to be successful. Funders known to CAS – including private foundations, corporations, individuals and our local United Way – were willing to take risks by underwriting the early stages of this new work, and many have sustained their funding because they have been pleased with the results.

3. **Assess and share your successes regularly — and always share the credit for them.** From the outset, CAS established both internal and external assessment mechanisms to learn from and improve our work. We put a lot of effort into keeping funders and others informed of the progress of our work —

through written reports, cultivation events and site visits. We were careful to share credit with our funders, whom we view as partners in a collective social change and service delivery improvement enterprise.

4. In fundraising, there is no substitute for hard work. Although fundraising is not the only part of CAS's sustainability planning, it is a core and ongoing component. In addition, fundraising is a shared responsibility, involving several board members and key staff at all levels of the organization — executive, development and program. For CAS, successful fundraising involves consistent prospecting, networking, proposal writing and reporting.

5. Be aggressive, but realistic, in fundraising. Conduct research continuously to unearth funding possibilities, but don't expect to find a "fit" everywhere. Assess your chances of success before investing a lot of time in meetings and proposal writing. CAS recently decided not to apply for new funding through the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, after assessing the high level of competition (only 12 grants were expected to be made nationally) and the less-than-optimal level of fit between the funder's priorities and ours (these grants were geared more toward research than direct service).

6. Be persistent if the fit is a good one. The initial Community School District 6/CAS application to the Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers in 1998 was not successful but, one year later, the reapplication was. Our persistence paid off handsomely, as the Federal funding increased from $40 million in 1998 to $200 million in 1999, and many of the individual grant awards in 1999 were much larger than those in the previous year.

7. Consult with education colleagues to co-construct your sustainability plan, making sure that you tap into available education as well as human services dollars. Since the community school brings together a wide range of service providers, it can open the door to a spectrum of funding opportunities that may not have been available to partners on their own. School personnel are often deeply knowledgeable about creative ways to use major education funding sources (i.e., using Title I to support parent involvement and after-school programs), while community-based organizations are equally knowledgeable about United Way, private foundations, corporations and individuals. In New

York City, CAS partnered with the Board of Education's Director of Funded Programs to plan the successful application to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CAS took the lead in preparing the application).

8. In doing your funding research, look broadly. Increasingly, government agencies are looking to fund programs that successfully leverage limited resources by building bridges and coordinating services within the community (see "Federal Support" below). The community school fits neatly into this category. CAS and others have tapped into a wide variety of public resources, not only from education sources but also from juvenile justice, substance abuse prevention, child care, summer youth employment and violence-reduction funding streams. In some states, newer sources that are supporting community school and after-school programs include TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) and tobacco settlement dollars.

9. Because public funds are often categorical and spotty, make sure you generate some flexible, private resources. Basic fundraising theory talks about the importance of the "three-legged stool" that ensures stability, coherence and adequacy. This theory is very relevant to community schools because the major public resources available to support community schools work are often incomplete: they may not arrive when we need them; they are often targeted toward expansion of existing programs rather than the core support of current services; and they may not underwrite all of the components we consider essential. Flexible, private resources can help to address these challenges.

10. Always have contingency plans. In fundraising, nothing is guaranteed and almost nothing lasts forever. CAS (and others) have had the experience of seeing funders' priorities change, even after a written commitment was made. For example, an early three-year Federal commitment for community schools ended after one year because a Congressional action shifted priorities in the sponsoring Federal agency.

In summary, long-term sustainability depends on a series of directed and strategic day-by-day efforts that ultimately – with hard work, persistence and intelligence – can add up to success.

Case Study: Sustaining CAS Community Schools

The Children's Aid Society began its community schools work in 1987 by envisioning a new kind of institution for children and families, and engaging in internal, neighborhood-based and citywide planning. The internal strategic planning led to decisions by CAS board and staff leaders to realign existing resources in support of this new work, while the external planning involved forging formal partnership agreements with the New York City Board of Education and the local Community School District 6. At an early stage, CAS staff and board addressed the issue of sustainability — that is, how to plan for the long-term development, implementation, assessment and institutionalization of this new line of work. By 2001, CAS had developed nine community schools in three New York City neighborhoods. This case study presents information on the conceptualization and implementation of CAS's efforts to support its local community school efforts.

Conceptual Approach

Consistent with the approach recommended by The Finance Project, a non-profit policy research organization that helps develop creative ways of financing children's services, CAS views sustainability as involving not only aggressive fundraising but also public relations, constituency-building and advocacy. CAS's current community school work runs on two tracks: local and national. This case study will describe the local work (although both tracks follow the same conceptual approach).

Fundraising – For fiscal year 2000-01, the core budget for CAS's eight community schools was approximately $6 million, which included approximately $4.4 million for the extended-day, summer camp, teen, parent and adult education components and an additional $1.6 million for health services, including medical, dental and mental health. In addition, two sites

have Early Head Start and Head Start programs operated by CAS; the costs for these programs are not included in the core budget and are covered entirely by Federal grants totaling approximately $1.2 million. Specifically:

- CAS generates support for its community schools through a wide variety of sources. During the initial years, core support came primarily from private sources, including foundations, corporations and individuals — with the exception of health and mental health services, which were, and are still, financed partly by Medicaid and partly by other public and private sources.

- In 1999, CAS and Community School District 6 were awarded a three-year Federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, which now provides nearly $1 million per year toward the support of our five Washington Heights schools. Additionally, two schools have been awarded a five-year "Advantage After-School Program" grant from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services for $145,000 per year. Another new source of support is the Soros Foundation's After-School Corporation program (TASC), which underwrites the after-school program in the five newest CAS community schools.

- On the public side, small state grants have underwritten specific additions (e.g., substance abuse prevention and mental health services) to the core work. In addition, Medicaid partially supports our medical, dental and mental health services.

- Continuous and aggressive private fundraising — Community schools have turned out to be easy for donors to understand, and site visits to the schools have helped to translate their conceptual understanding into financial commitments. CAS has enjoyed steady financial support from a wide variety of foundations, corporations and individuals.

Public Relations — CAS uses all of its regular channels of communication to generate visibility for its community schools work: annual reports; annual meetings; newsletters; annual *New York Times* Neediest Cases campaigns; speeches and presentations by CAS staff; and board and advisory committee meetings. In addition, we have developed monographs, videos and other support materials that serve multiple purposes, including public relations. Because the community schools program is considered integral to the work of CAS, the organization's Director of Public Relations actively and regularly promotes public awareness of community schools among her key media contacts.

Constituency-Building — CAS has built a multi-level constituency over the years, including the city political leaders – the mayor, city council, schools chancellor and director of youth services – as well as its own Board of Directors, neighborhood leaders, parents, principals, teachers and young people themselves. This is ongoing work and includes activities such as participating regularly in local school board meetings; making presentations about community schools at key events; inviting decision-makers to visit the schools; hosting visible community-wide events; responding to a wide variety of requests from parents and school personnel (i.e., demonstrating our value and our willingness to be partners); and providing regular updates and site visits for our own Board of Directors. In addition, CAS played a primary role in founding the Coalition for Community Schools, which takes a "big tent" approach to constituency-building nationally.

Advocacy — Since the beginning of our community schools work, we have harnessed the power of our long-standing relationships with local, state and national political leaders to advocate for increased public support for community schools. CAS staff have: testified at government-sponsored hearings; participated in government-organized planning meetings; prepared public comments in response to *Federal Register* announcements; responded to

invitations to review drafts of Federal and state requests for proposals; taught and organized parents (and even grandparents) to lobby for increased funding for after-school and related community school programs; and collaborated with colleagues from The After-School Corporation, Boys & Girls Clubs and the YMCA on city and state advocacy campaigns.

Federal Support for School-Based and School-Linked Services

In recent years a whole new wave of school-based service programs along the lines of the community school model has emerged in cities and towns nationwide. This development, though still in its early stages, has drawn attention to the need for integrated funding streams at all levels of government. As government leaders grapple with competing priorities for existing resources, the idea of local partnerships and collaborations becomes increasingly appealing. At the Federal level, a number of initiatives – some new, some long-established – present support opportunities for creative, comprehensive collaboration between schools and human service agencies working to provide school-based services to families and children. Some of these programs include:

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers — Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program provides grants for rural and urban public elementary or secondary schools to plan, implement or expand projects that benefit the education, health, social service, cultural and recreational needs of communities. Authorized under Title X, Part I, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the program enables school districts to fund public schools as community education centers that provide safe, supervised and enriching after-school activities for children, with access to homework centers, tutors,

and cultural, recreational and nutritional opportunities. In addition, the program provides funding for lifelong learning programs for community members in the school setting. As of November 2000, more than 3,600 schools in more than 900 communities received funding to become community learning centers. This program has experienced exponential growth since its inception — spending went from $1 million in 1997 to more than $450 million in 2000 and to approximately $850 million in 2001.

Title I — The ESEA earmarks $8.6 billion (FY 2001) to help disadvantaged children who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet challenging state academic standards. The Act was amended in 1994 so that some portion of it can be used to involve parents and community agencies in school-wide programs. Title XI of the ESEA gave school districts the flexibility to use five percent of their Title I funding for coordinated services programs. Schools in which 50 percent of the children come from low-income families are eligible to use Title I for school-wide programs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, more than 48,000 public schools across the country use Title I funds to provide academic support and learning opportunities to help low-achieving children master challenging curriculum and meet state standards in core academic subjects. For example, funds underwrite extra instruction in reading, mathematics, science and computers, as well as special pre-school, after-school and summer programs that extend and reinforce the regular school curriculum.

Head Start/Even Start — As reauthorized in 1994, the Head Start Program funds state collaboration project grants that help build early childhood systems and access to comprehensive services as well as supports for low-income children. Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, Even Start is designed to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy for low-income families with young children. The program provides Federal "glue money" to build on existing community resources that improve family literacy by integrating adult education, parenting education and early childhood education services into a

unified program. Projects are also required to include support services for children and parents, provide some services to parents and children together, provide some home-based services, integrate educational activities across the three core areas, coordinate service delivery with other local programs, conduct local evaluations, and participate in the national evaluation. The ESEA contains provisions that suggest collaboration between Even Start, Head Start and other efforts.

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities — Also authorized under the ESEA, this program administers a state formula grant program of approximately $650 million (FY 2001). States award communities grants for comprehensive drug prevention programs — mostly for the provision of classroom-based curricula, but also for programs that link schools and communities.

Safe Schools/Healthy Students — Administered jointly by the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services and Justice, the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program provides grants of up to $3 million per year for three years for communities to promote healthy child development and prevent violent behaviors through fully-linked education, mental health, law enforcement, juvenile justice and social services systems. In order to be considered for funding, schools must be working in partnership with other community resources at the local level. The comprehensive safe-school plans submitted for funding must be the product of a formal partnership between the school district, law enforcement and the local mental health authority, and created in collaboration with family members, students, juvenile justice officials and relevant community-based organizations. Programs that may be funded as part of this initiative include, but are not limited to, truancy prevention, alternative education, mentoring, conflict resolution, life skills, anti-drug and family strengthening, as well as professional development for staff.

Charter Schools — The U.S. Department of Education provides seed money (nearly $200 million in FY 2001) to states for the planning, design,

initial implementation and dissemination of information on charter schools created by teachers, parents and other members of local communities. Grants are available, on a competitive basis, to state education agencies (SEAs) in states that have charter school laws; SEAs in turn make sub-grants to authorized public chartering agencies in partnership with developers of charter schools. Several states have passed laws making charters available to local community groups.

Food and Nutrition — Administered by the Food and Nutrition Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) now offers cash reimbursement to help schools serve snacks to children after their regular school day ends, giving children a nutritional boost and encouraging their participation in supervised learning opportunities. Within individual states, the program is administered by a state agency, in most cases through offices in the State Department of Education. At the local level, the program is administered by the school/school district. Another USDA program, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), provides free, nutritious meals and snacks to help children in low-income areas get the nutrition they need to learn, play and grow throughout the summer months when they are out of school. Locally, SFSP is run by approved sponsors, including school districts, local government agencies, camps and private nonprofit organizations. Sponsors provide free meals to groups of children at central sites, such as schools or community centers. They receive payments from USDA through their state agencies for the meals they serve and for their documented operating costs.

U.S. Department of Justice — The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has launched a major effort in recent years to develop effective prevention programs. Most of its funding goes to states as block grants, but significant funding is also available for discretionary grants to communities through such programs as Weed and Seed, Gang-Free Schools and Communities, Drug Prevention Demonstration Project and the Juvenile

Mentoring Program (JUMP). A key strategy in OJJDP's approach to juvenile crime reduction has been the Title V Community Prevention Grants Program, which provides communities with the resources needed to identify and respond to root causes of local juvenile delinquency problems through comprehensive, collaborative prevention planning. In the past, OJJDP funds have been earmarked for special projects and could be used to support community schools.

Reading Excellence — In 1998, Congress enacted the Reading Excellence Act (REA) as an amendment to Title II of the ESEA. The program is designed to ensure that all children read well and independently by the end of the third grade, as well as to improve the educational practices of teachers and other instructional staff in elementary schools. The U.S. Department of Education makes competitive, three-year grants to state education agencies (SEAs), which in turn provide local reading improvement grants to schools districts. The program provides professional development for teachers and other instructional staff, extended learning and tutorial services, extra assistance for kindergarten students who need help making the transition into first grade, and family literacy services to improve reading.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) — Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities are charged with planning economic and community development strategies, which can theoretically involve the creation of community schools. HUD also contains a Community Outreach Partnership Center that works with universities to develop community-based programs, including community schools.

The Family Preservation and Support Program — This program provides funding for states to improve the well-being of vulnerable children and their families, particularly those experiencing, or at risk of, abuse and neglect. States are encouraged to use the program as a catalyst for establishing a continuum of coordinated, integrated, culturally-relevant and family-focused services.

Activities range from preventive efforts that develop strong families to intervention services for families in crisis.

Child Abuse and Neglect Discretionary Activities — Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office on Child Abuse and Neglect, this program provides grants to improve national, state, community and family activities for the prevention, assessment, identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Grants are available to state and local governments, as well as nonprofit institutions and organizations. Contracts are available to public and private agencies. Funds have been used for school-based prevention programs, as well as for research and demonstration activities.

Community Health Centers — Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this program provides project grants to public agencies, nonprofit private organizations and a limited number of state and local governments to support the development and operation of community health centers that provide preventive and primary health care services, supplemental health and support services, and environmental health services to medically underserved populations. Grants have been used to fund health centers, health networks to support systems of care, community health programs and planning activities. HHS will consider public and private community-based health care centers and schools as potential partners for funding.

Next Steps

Conclusion

Next Steps

Now that we have presented you with the philosophy that drives community schools and a snapshot of what community schools look like in action, you should be ready to begin shaping your own community schools program. Your next steps are your first steps. Here are some suggestions for those steps:

1. Get Support from the Top

If you think a community school would work in your community, you are going to need the approval and support of top school officials and school board members. Go to them first with your proposal and vision.

2. Work the "Critical Middle"

Forge partnerships with critical players in your community. At minimum, your team should include school staff (especially principals), school boards, parents, community leaders, social service providers and community-based organizations.

3. Assess Your Community

Conduct a thorough survey of your community, analyzing demographic and economic data, school conditions and performance measures, and other data from private and public health, education and social service sectors. Survey the number and scope of existing services in the community. Be sure to get input from human service professionals, teachers, school administrators, parents and the broader community through opinion surveys and face-to-face interviews. Keep cultural considerations in mind throughout your research.

4. Clarify Your Vision and Mission

Once your team is in place and the needs of the community are clear, develop a vision statement that represents your community school partnership's overarching priorities and its short- and long-term goals.

5. Investigate Funding Sources

Research and target both public and private sources for the funding that you will need for your endeavor. In some cases, existing resources may be leveraged or shifted from funding that already exists in the service areas you are considering.

6. Develop a Detailed Program Plan

Chart a course for your community school, detailing the service areas you will pursue, staffing, governance procedures and a timeline for implementation.

7. Start Small and Build Gradually

Instead of trying to offer everything in your community school from the outset, consider implementing program components incrementally. By doing so, you can start out with a modest budget and overcome potential obstacles while the program is still on a manageable scale. You might start, for example, with a Family Resource Center and a partial after-school program; or you might start a health program with medical services and add dental later.

8. Establish a Mechanism for Measuring Success

From the start, you should have a plan for gauging your success, based on the goals you have established for your program. It is best if this evaluation is organized by experienced professionals, but includes all members of your team, and if it measures both "process" and "outcome" goals. Contact your local university schools of social work and education for help in conducting your evaluation.

9. Stay Creative and Flexible

Your community school program may look different in practice than it did on paper. This is normal, and even good. Your plan and vision statement should serve as guides, not straitjackets. Your school team and structure should be flexible; it should evolve as it grows and be open to exciting new possibilities and creative ideas every day.

Conclusion

Major change does not come easy. The temptation to maintain the status quo or to make only small adjustments can be strong, especially when you are confronted with challenges as overwhelming as those presented by our nation's schools. But small changes yield only small results.

Building a community school means having the courage to bring about radical change; it means transforming and redefining forever how you and your neighbors view schools as institutions. It takes hard work, careful planning, creativity, the full participation of all segments of the community — and above all else, a willingness to hold the interests of our children at the center of our attention. Most of all, the creation of a community school requires an abiding belief that all children can learn and succeed in school if they are given the love, respect and support they need and deserve.

Suggested Resources

Community Schools

Collaboration

Youth Development/After-School

Family/Community Engagement

Family Support/Coordinated Services

Technical Assistance/Assessment

Financing/Sustainability

Other Research on Youth Indicators and Education Policy

Website Resources

Suggested Resources

Community Schools

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Website Resources

www.childrensaidsociety.org — The Children's Aid Society

www.communityschools.org — Coalition for Community Schools

www.financeproject.org — The Finance Project

www.publiceducation.org — Public Education Network

www.ncsl.org (www.ncsl.org/programs/health/pp/strvsrch.htm) — A state revenue survey database that allows users to access state-specific information in various school health components.

www.ed.gov/21stcclc — 21st Century Community Learning Centers

www.ed.gov/free — Free Federal Resources for Education Excellence; free teaching and learning resources from more than 40 Federal organizations for teachers, parents, students.

www.niost.org — National Institute on Out-of-School Time

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